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Washtenaw Jewish News
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WASHTENAW JEWISH NEWS

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A historic moment in Syrian and Jewish history

By Rabbi Asher Lopatin, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

This is a time when the Jewish community in our county is still reeling from the trauma of October 7 and the pain of hostages returning dead, or tortured and starved, or not returning at all. Certainly, the Arab American and Muslim community is also feeling the pain of the Israel-Hamas war. As Community Relations Director at the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor, I have not stopped trying to connect the Jewish community with the Muslim and Arab American community. Many Jewish volunteer leaders, including parents of children in local public schools and others, are making efforts to connect as well. It has not been easy. However, new hope came to me in February as I was asked by a Muslim Syrian doctor, Dr. Yahya Basha, to join a mission to Syria.

The mission was to be made up of Syrian Jews who had fled Syria in 1992 under the brutal Assad regime. After the fall of the Assad regime, a U.S.-based nonprofit organization, the Syrian Emergency Task Force, reached out to the Syrian government to specifically invite Syrian Jews to return there. The new government says it hopes to make Syria a tolerant place, respectful of all religions including Jews, and this mission would be an opportunity for the government to demonstrate its commitment to this idea.

Rabbi Asher Lopatin (R) in the Al-Frej Synagogue in Damascus (Photo credit: Daniel Bucksbaum)

Not long after the invitation came to me the Syrian government welcomed our small delegation of five Jews with warmth and great respect — we were treated as VIPs from landing at the airport until our departure. Leading the mission was Rabbi Yosef Hamra, a leader of the Syrian Jewish community in New York, and his son Henry, who both left Syria in 1992 and have not been back since.

One of the most moving experiences of this trip was when we entered the Al-Frej Synagogue in the former Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Damascus. The synagogue has been untouched for over 30 years, since almost the entire Jewish community left. To have the privilege of seeing the Torah scrolls opened and read from and then praying the afternoon service there was deeply affecting. What added to the excitement was that Henry Hamra found the exact Torah he read from for his bar mitzvah, and we took it out among all the other Torahs, and he read from it. The thrill of being in the synagogue where the Hamras prayed every week was only matched by overwhelming joy — and great surprise from the older Arab residents of the area as they met the Hamras on the streets of the Jewish Quarter. Long conversations in Arabic discussed the old days and the possibility of a new future for Syria, with the engagement of the Syrian Jewish community all over the world.

Today's Syria, just a few months after the cruel regime of Bashar al-Assad was

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Hebrew Day School 50th anniversary honorees

By Tamar Jacobson

With 50 years of history shaping Jewish children in Ann Arbor, choosing honorees for our 50th anniversary celebration on May 15 was not easy. We were founded in 1974 by visionaries — local University of Michigan professors and other young families who wanted their children to grow up proud and knowledgeable about their heritage while receiving an excellent education. They had no way of knowing that 50 years later, our school would be standing strong as a pillar of the Ann Arbor Jewish community. After surveying our alumni and numerous board and committee discussions, we chose to honor past leaders, inspirational faculty, and distinguished alumni who well-represented the kinds of volunteer leaders, professional warm educators, and confident proud Jewish alumni who graduate from Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor.

Dedicated Leaders: Eve and Richard Primus

Richard Primus

Eve Primus

We are proud to honor Eve and Richard Primus for their years of service as leaders at our school. Eve, the Yale Kamisar Collegiate Professor of Law at the University of Michigan, has been a steadfast supporter of HDS, serving as head of the HDS Parent Connection from 2017 to 2021. Her leadership helped strengthen the bond between families and the school, fostering a close-knit and engaged parent community before and during the COVID pandemic. Richard, the Theodore J. St. Antoine Collegiate Professor of Law at the University of Michigan, contributed significantly to HDS as a member of the Board of Trustees from 2009 to 2014, serving as President from 2012 to 2014. His leadership and dedication to the school community have made a real impact on all who have had the privilege of working alongside him.

Beyond their leadership roles, Eve and Richard are the parents of three HDS alumni. Their children — Jessica (HDS Class of 2019), Jonathan (HDS Class of 2021), and Talia (HDS Class of 2024) — make the Primus family an integral part of the HDS legacy. Their commitment to our school's mission exemplifies the lasting connections that HDS fosters across generations. We are so grateful for the impact they have had on our community.

Inspirational Faculty: Josh Lauffer

When our alumni from the 1990s and their parents speak about Josh Lauffer, their faces light up with visible love and admiration for this educator. The stories they tell include how Josh was not a typical teacher: he taught kabbalist melodies, led Shabbat walks through the forest, and made Jewish teachings come alive. He even recorded

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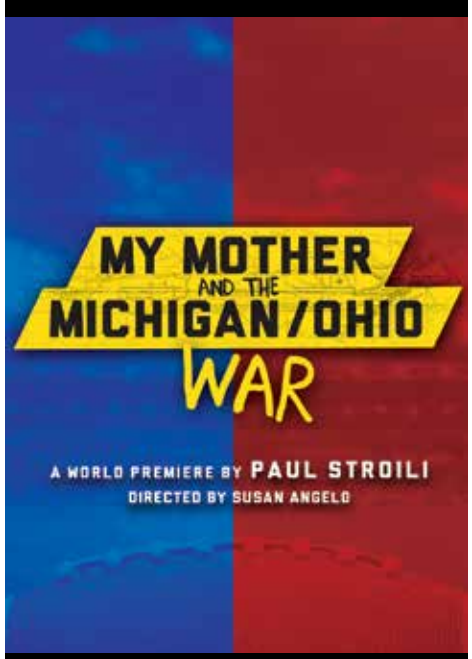

Izzy's history buff husband Freddy had a dream: a full-scale reenactment of The Michigan-Ohio War. But when a bizarre papier-mâché accident leaves Izzy a widow, she calls on her Wolverine daughter and Buckeye son to see Freddy's vision realized. Historical becomes hysterical in this comedy about family, football and the fight for the Toledo strip.

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From the editor

Surprised?

The Jewish historian Joshua Shanes (author of *Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish Identity in Habsburg Galicia*), recently listed on Facebook a list of ten things that have surprised him about the fascist revolution we are now living through. In summary, he wrote he was surprised by the speed of the destruction of our government and the pace of the arrest and persecution of MAGA's opponents; the openness of the MAGA leaders about what they intend regarding their racist purposes, their threats of military action, and their own corruption; and finally, the capitulation of the entire Republican Party as well as the established Democratic Party.

I couldn't deny most of what Shanes pointedly wrote. Yet, he included being surprised at "[T]he extent to which most Americans seem unaware (because of rightwing echo chamber) or disinterested or too busy with their daily lives to know about any of this." I'm not sure I agree with this last point. Despite weak coverage in the mainstream press, there is an outpouring of opposition from everyday Americans and a tremendous amount of organizing energy going into slowing down, stopping, and reversing the fascist policies.

Each of us has our own lane of activity, our own sphere of influence, in which to resist the authoritarian tide. For instance, the CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor, along with four local rabbis issued a strong statement of opposition to the arrest and detention of Palestinian green card holder Mahmoud Khalil (see their statement on page 4). The signatories express the need to protect free speech and due process and clearly declare that our community is not made safer by the unlawful arrest of Mr. Khalil and others.

I appreciate their statement and leadership and hope by publishing it here in the Washtenaw Jewish News, its important message will be amplified.

Jewish students at the University of Michigan also created a signatory letter addressed to President Ono that begins:

> "*We are a group of Jewish students at the University of Michigan. We hold a range of political views and relationships to Israel and Palestine. We take antisemitism seriously, and for this reason, we are appalled by its dangerous weaponization to target Palestinian, Muslim, Arab, and immigrant students, threaten student activists, and gut institutions of higher education. We are united in denouncing the weaponization of antisemitism accusations to target our classmates, friends, teachers, and neighbors. When antisemitism is misrepresented as speech the government dislikes, it loses its meaning and causes real instances of antisemitism to be taken less seriously– further endangering Jewish students. The Trump administration is cynically making Jews the face of authoritarian repression and diluting antisemitism's meaning through politically motivated accusations. These actions make Jews less safe. They chill free expression and make our university a less vibrant place in which to live and learn. Above all, they destabilize the lives of those who fear they will be the next victims of the Trump administration's unlawful attacks on non-citizens, dissent, and civil liberties.*"

The WJN is also stepping up the actions it can take to meet this moment. The WashtenawJewishNews.org website now includes a Calender of Events, a rolling, curated listing of performances, movies, lectures, meetings, protests, and other events that enhance the rich diversity of the local Jewish community and also includes opportunities to learn with and express solidarity with the Black, Palestinian, queer, immigrant and other vulnerable and progressive communities. You can access this calendar at https://washtenawjewishnews.org/calendar/ or use this QR Code. ■

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Michael Fried and Joan Cohen Jones at the Amster Gallery

By Drew Coel, Marketing and Program Associate, Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor

The Amster Gallery at the Ann Arbor JCC welcomes in another spring season with two special exhibits, the reception taking place on Tuesday, April 8, from 6–7:30 p.m. Schmooze and have a nosh while enjoying the beautiful work of these talented artists.

Michael Fried

Featured this spring in the JCC's Newman Lounge is a collection by photographer Michael Fried, titled *Flamingos at Pont de Gau*. An Ann Arbor resident since 1959, Michael is excited to show his wildlife photography at the JCC. After his retirement, Michael's passion for photography deepened when he began studying at Washtenaw Community College. "I was fortunate to be in WCC's outstanding photography program and learn under terrific educators like Terry Abrams and Don Werthmann," Michael states. "After earning my associate's degree in photography in 2023, I continue to experiment with techniques that challenge conventional ways of seeing."

Flamingos at Pont de Gau continues this approach by capturing the elegance, movement, and presence of the birds in a way that highlights both their individuality and collective rhythm. Shot in the Camargue region of France, this body of work reflects Michael's fascination with how form, light, and perspective interact. "Rather than merely presenting wildlife photography, I aim to create compositions that emphasize the almost surreal beauty of flamingos — their elongated forms, their fluidity in water and air, and the dynamic spaces they inhabit," Michael shares. "I invite viewers to see beyond the familiar — to notice the abstract patterns in nature, the poetry of movement, and the reflections of images in the water evoking quiet moments of solitude existing within a chaotic world."

In addition to his wonderful photography, Michael has been extremely active in the Ann Arbor community, having served on the founding board of the JCC, the WCC Photography Advisory Board, and boards of Jewish Family Services, the Hebrew Day School, Beth Israel Congregation, and the Dispute Resolution Center.

Also featured this spring in the JCC's Amster Gallery is the amazing new water-

Joan Cohen Jones

color painting collection of Joan Cohen Jones, who featured her work here in the winter and spring of 2024. Her work has been very well received and collected by watercolor enthusiasts both locally and nationally. Viewers often comment about the light she achieves in her work, and the sense of peace and calm her work evokes. She has one piece in the permanent collection of the Ann Arbor City Club, and returns there for a solo show in June.

In the past year, Joan was invited to have several solo exhibits including at the First Presbyterian Church, University Commons, and the Ann Arbor Senior Center. Her work appeared in the holiday show at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens. She has also participated in several shows with other local artists.

Last summer, during her annual trip to Maine, Joan became interested in miniatures and, over the past year, has painted many 2"x3" scenes that are very popular. These tiny paintings often take more skill than ones that are much larger, but Joan loves the challenges they present. Some of her tiny paintings are currently at the Phoenix Gallery in Saline, but will soon be available here at the JCC.

Most recently, Joan has utilized her many years of teaching experience to teach art. In July 2024, Joan taught a Sketch 'n' Sip at the JCC, showing participants how to paint watercolor flowers utilizing watercolor pencils. In addition, she is currently teaching a beginner watercolor class for Osher Lifelong Learning. She enjoys sharing her expertise with beginners and helping them to begin their watercolor journeys. One of the participants recently commented that Joan listens to her students "with her eyes" by looking at their work and helping them to see how they can improve their practice. Joan is a born teacher and hopes to expand her teaching of watercolor in the next year. Joan reflects that she has "come full circle," beginning as an artist, then becoming a teacher, and now combining both skills.

Both Michael and Joan's art are up now in the Newman Lounge and Amster Gallery, respectively, and will be available to view until May 29–30.

We hope to see you at the reception on April 8.. ■

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Ari Smith named a 36 under 36 by DJN

The *Detroit Jewish News* has honored Washtenaw star Ari Smith as one of the 36 under 36 to pay attention to. In addition to all of the things DJN mentioned in their tribute below, Ari delivers the *Washtenaw Jewish News* to libraries, coffee shops, and other interesting locations each month.

From DJN:

Ari Smith has been a lifelong resident of Ypsilanti, joining Ann Arbor's Temple Beth Emeth (TBE) in 2020. Since then, she has become a dedicated member of the temple community, starting with the founding of Mishpacha, the temple's queer affinity group.

As a leader in Mishpacha, Smith co-leads a weekly Queer Torah Study where Jews of all backgrounds can gather to study Torah from a queer lens and find themes of inclusion, activism, and belonging in our rich texts and history. Mishpacha also hosts TBE's annual Trans Day of Visibility Shabbat, Pride Shabbat, holiday events, and monthly LGBTQ+ potlucks.

Her involvement with TBE has grown beyond Mishpacha to a board position as vice president of the Religious Practices committee, as well as teaching both fourth and fifth grade in the temple's Hebrew and Religious schools.

One of her greatest joys is education, both for her young students and adults attending Torah study. Being able to show students how to recognize themselves in Judaism and find a place of belonging, understanding, and love in their practice is endlessly rewarding.

In her personal time, Smith enjoys learning about artistic traditions in Judaism, sewing and embroidering her own ritual objects, such as tallitot, and chanting Torah. ■

AARC events for April

For more information about services or events or to receive Zoom links, please email:
emily@aarecon.org. Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation website: aarecon.org

April 12
Second Saturday Morning Shabbat Service. Meditation led by Anita Rubin-Meuller, 10–10:20 a.m. followed by a hybrid Shabbat Service led by our Rabbi, Gabrielle Pescador, at the JCC and on Zoom. Kiddush afterwards celebrating the aufruf of Tommy Cohn in honor of his upcoming marriage to Molly Cooke,10:30 a.m.–12 noon.

April 16
Pop-In Teaching on Zoom. This is an hour led by our Rabbi.
7–8 p.m.

April 24
Fourth Friday Kabbalat Shabbat. This is a hybrid service led by Rabbi Gabrielle Pescador in person at the JCC and on Zoom. Everyone is welcome! Followed by a nut-free potluck Oneg. 6:30 p.m.

April 28
Rosh Chodesh Iyar Minyan on Zoom. 9 a.m.

Chabad Community Passover Seder

Chabad of Ann Arbor is once again preparing to host its annual Community Seder at the Ann Arbor Senior Center. Now in its third year, this beloved gathering brings together community members from all walks of life to relive the Exodus story in a warm, interactive, and welcoming atmosphere.

Each year, the Seder has drawn a diverse crowd — young and old, families and individuals, first-time attendees and those who have celebrated Passover for a lifetime. It is a night of unity and connection, where tradition comes alive through shared experiences, meaningful discussions, and joyous singing.

The Seder features a full-course dinner with a delicious menu, including tender brisket, kugel, tzimmes, and other traditional holiday dishes. The evening follows the full Seder experience, with the four cups of wine, matzah, and the reading of the Haggadah. But this is not a Seder where guests simply watch — it is designed to be interactive, with everyone contributing in some way.

The Haggadah is read in both Hebrew and English, ensuring that all participants, regardless of background or familiarity with Hebrew, can fully engage in the experience. Songs, discussions, and insights enrich the evening, making the retelling of the Exodus both meaningful and relevant.

Children also have a special role in the Seder, adding an element of fun and excitement. Through a skit and other interactive elements, they bring their own energy and enthusiasm to the table, reminding us all of the importance of passing down our traditions to the next generation.

Whether you have attended a Seder every year or this will be your first time, you are welcome to join us for an evening of tradition, inspiration, and community. Come experience the warmth, connection, and joy of Passover as we celebrate together on Saturday, April 12, at 7:45 p.m. at the Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin. The cost is $54 per person. For more details and to RSVP, visit www.jewmich.com/events. ■

Statement on Free Speech & Due Process

By Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor, Mar 13, 2025

Throughout history, we Jews have been silenced. Rarely in our 2,000 years of diaspora have we been able to publicly express our disdain for state policies without facing the wrath of our host countries. But not so in America. Since President Washington wrote to the Jews of Newport, expressing his hope that "…the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths," we have been buoyed by the belief that America might be different—that here, we could be both fully American and fully Jewish. Our First Amendment rights are central to that possibility, and for that reason, we have been steadfast defenders of free speech for all.

It was for that reason that in 2018, the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor defended Richard Spencer's right to speak at the University of Michigan, despite finding his speech bigoted, racist, and antisemitic. A society that silences speech is not safe for any of us. Tolerating speech we find reprehensible is not a concession—it is a fundamental principle of American democracy.

On Saturday, March 8th, Mahmoud Khalil, a Palestinian activist and recent Columbia University graduate, was arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The administration explained its actions by stating that Mr. Khalil is "pro-terrorist, anti-semitic, anti-American." Without due process, government agents claimed his green card had been revoked and sent him to a detention facility in Louisiana.

American Jews are rightfully concerned about the rise in antisemitism in our country and the role that campus protests have played in it. Legitimate claims of such must be addressed. If credible evidence exists that Mr. Khalil is aligned with Hamas or another designated terrorist organization, we would support appropriate lawful consequences. But due process and free speech are cornerstones of our democracy. Merely protesting, leading protests, or speaking out against the policies of the American government should not be grounds for deportation or revocation of legal status in the United States, nor should combatting antisemitism be used to justify actions that deny others their civil rights.

Jews and our communal institutions have always and will continue to fight to protect civil rights and civil liberties because societies with those protections are the only ones in which we, and other minority communities, can be safe.

Recently, Amy Spitalnick, CEO of Jewish Council for Public Affairs stated that "our community should not be used as an excuse to upend democracy & the rule of law," and we concur. The Jewish community is not made safer by Mr. Khalil's arrest. On the contrary, it is endangered by it. We know all too well from our own history: in places where speech is suppressed and due process not followed, Jews, too, will inevitably be silenced.

L'Shalom,
Eileen Freed (CEO, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor), Rav Nadav Caine (Beth Israel Congregation), Rabbi Will Keller (Head of School, Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor), Rabbi Gabrielle Pescador (Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation), Rabbi Josh Whinston (Temple Beth Emeth) ■

Federation nominations for volunteer leadership

By Eileen Freed, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

Together with the professional team, volunteers of the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor address the most significant issues facing the Jewish community. The Governance Committee of the Federation's Board seeks to engage people from across the community as committee volunteers, chairs, and board members. The Federation invites community members to express their interest in volunteer leadership positions for 2025–2026.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor's mission is to provide and inspire philanthropic leadership and community-building to nurture a strong, engaged, connected, caring, vibrant, and enduring Jewish community locally, in Israel, and around the world. The Jewish Federation leads and provides the platform for collaboration to attend to broad communal concerns, identify and address unmet needs, and develop innovative programming to strengthen the community.

The Federation relies on the generous time of volunteers to achieve its goals. "The ideal Federation volunteers are those that reflect the breadth, depth, and diversity of our Jewish Washtenaw County community, including divergent viewpoints, affiliations, non-affiliations, and the like," says Decky Alexander, Federation's immediate past Board President and current Governance Committee Chair. "We welcome people with skills in communications, fundraising, community-building, allocations, and event planning, and those who seek to further develop experience in these areas. Board members gain a strong perspective on the overall needs of the community and work creatively — both internally and with counterparts in other organizations — to address them."

The Jewish Federation's most well-known function is the Annual Community Campaign, which raises crucial, unrestricted funds that our partner organizations need to operate, leaving them free to more fully focus on their missions serving the community. Fundraising beyond the Annual Community Campaign enables Federation to tackle specific challenges, such as improving building security, increasing the number of children who attend Jewish summer camps, and addressing social service needs.

The planned giving arm of the Federation, the Jewish Community Foundation, provides donors the opportunity to endow organizations and programs they love. Through Life & Legacy, the Foundation is also helping to build a culture of legacy giving across the community. This is an exciting opportunity for volunteers interested in the long-term sustainability of our local Jewish community.

Federation works to engage the community with programs such as NextGen A2 and Women's Philanthropy. Some engagement initiatives include programs that foster connections and understanding around Israel, such as Partnership2Gether and an annual education series about important issues in Israel addressed by Federation's allocations, and the Jewish Community Relations Committee, which provides a platform for interaction with other faith, ethnic, and civic communities in Washtenaw County, and an opportunity to be present and to represent the Jewish community in broader communal issues.

From its unique position, the Jewish Federation convenes the community around issues of importance to nurture a strong communal infrastructure. This includes addressing communal security needs, fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment for people of all abilities and backgrounds, and coordinating the upcoming community visioning and long-range strategic planning process.

Serving as a Federation volunteer means giving a few hours of your time on a regular basis to strengthen and enrich Jewish life locally and around the world. It is an opportunity to learn and grow as a leader and to make one's voice heard in shaping community for the next generation.

"My involvement with Federation gives me an opportunity to serve our community while making new friends, learning new skills, and helping to ensure our community is welcoming, inclusive, and supportive. Federation is the place to channel your energy to sustain and build a community where everyone feels at home," says current Federation President Marla Linderman Richelew. "We have a diverse, engaged, and vibrant board, and I hope not only to strengthen it, but to provide a pathway for new, young, and seasoned leaders to thrive now and in the future. We are all in this together — Federation is a place for everyone. Federation is here for you."

Individuals interested in serving on a committee or on the Federation Board of Directors should contact Eileen Freed at 734-773-3537 or eileenfreed@jewishannarbor.org. For more information about Federation, visit www.jewishannarbor.org. ■

Investing in a communal future

By Jewish Federation Staff

Are you passionate about making a meaningful difference in the local Jewish community? Whether it's supporting causes within the Jewish community or beyond it, the Jewish Community Foundation offers a unique and powerful way to make a lasting impact.

Founded in 1998, the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Ann Arbor serves as the planned giving arm of the local Jewish Federation. The Foundation empowers individuals to create or contribute to permanent endowment funds that support both current and future community needs in the greater Ann Arbor area. Through these funds, the Foundation helps ensure that financial resources are available to meet the evolving needs of the community for generations.

The Jewish Community Foundation manages 68 endowment funds created by local Jewish congregations, organizations, and community members, which together represent over $11 million in assets. Unlike investing with a traditional for-profit financial institution that seeks to grow its own profits, when the Foundation earns fees through the management of these funds, it can reinvest that revenue in projects that meet both immediate and long-term Jewish communal needs.

An endowment fund is invested for growth to generate ongoing income. Each year, only a portion of the fund's interest is withdrawn for philanthropic use, preserving the principal and allowing it to grow and continue making a difference for years. Endowment funds can also be established to preserve the annual contributions you're currently making, such as to synagogue dues or annual campaigns, solidifying financial sustainability to those beneficiary organizations for generations. Whether you care most about a synagogue, a Jewish communal organization, or a specific community project, the Foundation provides a platform to make your philanthropic goals a reality.

Creating an endowment fund with the Jewish Community Foundation requires a minimum contribution of $10,000. However, if you're not ready to create a fund but still want to make an impact, you can contribute to one of the Foundation's existing funds. One such example is the Irene Butter Fund for Holocaust and Human Rights Education, which supports educational programming that ensures the lessons of the Holocaust are preserved and taught to future generations.

For many in the Jewish community, the desire to give extends beyond their lifetime. If you've been a dedicated supporter of Jewish organizations in the greater Ann Arbor area, you may want to consider leaving a legacy by including them in your estate plan. Legacy gifts can take various forms, including a specific dollar amount or percentage of your estate, and are often made by designating a Jewish organization as the beneficiary of a retirement plan or naming it in a will. You can direct these gifts to existing endowments or establish new ones that will continue to support the community.

To promote legacy giving, the Ann Arbor area Jewish community takes part in the national Life & Legacy® program, coordinated locally by Osnat Gafni-Pappas at the Jewish Federation. "The Life & Legacy program has provided the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor with the resources to strengthen our endowment, while also placing legacy giving at the center of our conversations with donors," Gafni-Pappas says. "We're excited and committed to incorporating after-lifetime giving into our philanthropic culture and making it a standard practice. The program's collaborative, inter-organizational approach has been an ideal match for the Ann Arbor community, and we're pleased to see its significant impact across local Jewish institutions, not just the Federation. While we have completed the program's initial four years, we feel fortunate to be able to continue working with the Harold Grinspoon Foundation in an extension of the program for four more."

The Jewish Community Foundation is here to support you in your philanthropic journey, offering easy and creative ways to make a significant difference. Together, we can make a lasting impact in both our local Jewish community and in the broader world.

For more information about how you can contribute to or create an endowment fund, visit the Jewish Community Foundation's website at www.jewishannarbor.org/ways-to-give/foundation. To discuss your philanthropic goals with someone, reach out to Jewish Federation CEO Eileen Freed at eileenfreed@jewishannarbor.org. ■

Simchas and Sorrows

The Washtenaw Jewish community sends condolences to the families of:

Georgia Wright, sister of Nancy (Elena) Weissman, and grandmother of Zachary, February 18, 2025.
Harold A (Buddy) Marks, Jr., father of Cathy (Jack) Marshall. February 20, 2025.
Larry Kay, father of Joshua Kay (Carolyn Hatcher-Kay). February 24, 2025.
Alexander Weitz, husband of Susan Weitz. March 6, 2025.
David Ball, brother of Richard Ball and brother-in-law of Deborah Loewenberg Ball; uncle of Sarah Hakala, Joshua Ball, and Jacob Loewenberg Ball; and great uncle of Owen, Emme, and Lucy Hakala, February 11.
Ilene Zeff, sister of Linda Baruch and sister-in-law of Murray Baruch, February 22.
Harriet Goldberg, mother of Caren Goldberg, February 24.
Mark Higbee, husband of Kate Levin.

The Washtenaw Jewish community sends mazel tovs to:
Mazel Tov to Ari Smith on being named one of *Detroit Jewish News'* 36 Under 36.
Noa Shtein on her bat mitzvah, April 5.
Robert Marr and Jessica Leadholm-Marr on the birth of their daughter, Tzipporah Skye Marr.

Announcing AARC's Year of Water

By Rabbi Gabrielle Pescador, Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation

The Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation is thrilled to announce that 2025 will be dedicated as The Year of Water. Water, a symbol of life, renewal, and transformation, flows through the heart of Jewish tradition, reminding us of the ever-changing yet enduring essence of faith and community, which connects us to each other, the natural world, and the Divine. Focusing on the life-giving power of water also alerts us to how the climate crisis threatens this precious resource.

Rabbi Gabrielle Pescador

Water holds profound significance in Jewish texts and rituals. From the parting of the Red Sea to the mikveh's purifying waters, it represents both physical and spiritual transitions. Water is a source of blessing, sustenance, and growth, and serves as a metaphor for Torah itself and the Divine Presence. Central to the creation story, where the spirit of God hovers over the waters at the very beginning of existence, the element symbolizes the primordial source from which all life emerges.

Such themes will be explored in AARC's Year of Water through diverse programming and initiatives designed to inspire reflection, connection, and social action. Educational offerings will delve into water's role in Torah, rabbinic texts, Jewish ritual, and environmental and climate protection responsibilities.

In Shabbat services, AARC has already begun to offer special prayers, music, and rituals that highlight water's sacred role. We are excited to introduce the ritual of Miriam's Cup as part of Kiddush, honoring the well of Miriam that provided water to the Israelites in the desert and celebrating the vital role of women in spiritual and communal life.

Community involvement will be encouraged, with opportunities for social action focused on climate action, water justice, and environmental stewardship.

Given our location in the Great Lakes region, we will emphasize eco-consciousness specific to our freshwater resources and their role in sustaining life, their environmental challenges, and ways we can contribute to their preservation. We will focus on the Huron River, our cherished local waterway, and promote its protection through clean water practices and advocacy.

In the warmer months, we hope to add interfaith prayerful walks along the Huron River, featuring healing chants and sharing water wisdom from different faith traditions. These gatherings will provide opportunities for spiritual reflection, ecological awareness, and community-building across diverse backgrounds, deepening our collective reverence for the sacredness of water.

As the AARC community immerses itself in The Year of Water, we hope to become in more harmonious relationship with the element of water within our physical, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual landscapes. ■

Climate Hero of the Month: Erica Ackerman

By Emily Eisbruch

A member of the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation, Erica serves on the Executive Committee of the Sierra Club Huron Valley Group and is the new programs chair.

Erica, tell us about the origins of your climate activism.

I became a climate activist leading up to the 2008 election. Working with the groups "Obama for America" and then "Organizing for Action," I developed presentations to raise climate change awareness. We coordinated climate change symposiums in Dexter, Jackson, Canton, and Ypsilanti.

How did you become a leader with the Sierra Club?

In 2018, longtime Washtenaw County activist Dan Ezekiel asked me to run for the Sierra Club of Huron Valley executive committee, and I was honored to step up. At the time, funding for climate initiatives in the city of Ann Arbor was in doubt. The Sierra Club mobilized our community to attend city council meetings and to make their voices heard. These efforts were impactful, and in 2019 the Ann Arbor city council passed the A2ZERO plan. A key goal of A2ZERO is to realize community-wide carbon neutrality by 2030.

Have Jewish values played a part in your climate activism work?

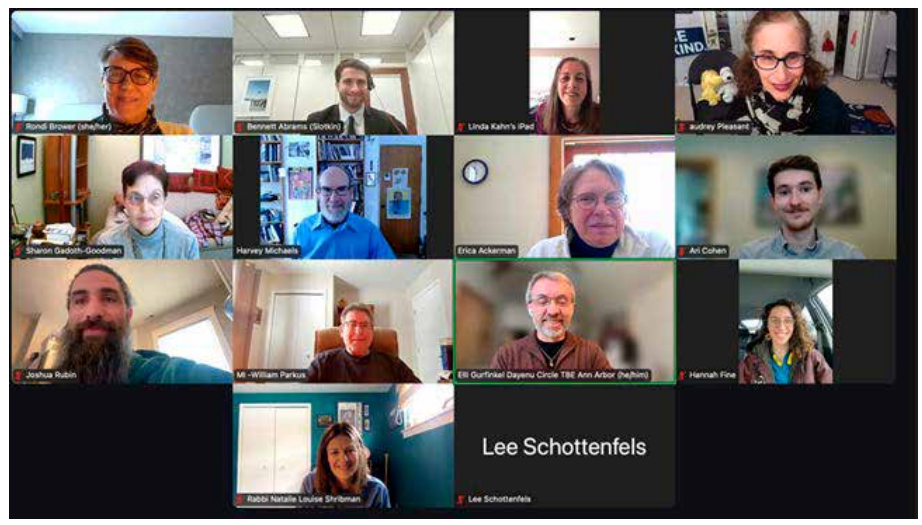
Yes, for me it all seems integral; Jewish values lead to wanting to protect our environment, and advocating for the earth leads to appreciation of Jewish values, especially around Tikkun Olam (repairing the world).

Regarding activism in the Jewish community, prompted by our rabbi, I recently participated in lobbying through Jewish Earth Alliance, where we pushed our U.S. Senators to defend our progress on climate action.

Advice for others who want to get involved?

Erica Ackerman

The Sierra Club could definitely use more people who are active and interested in taking action. Start by attending the monthly Sierra Club program meetings, held on the third Tuesday of the month, 6 to 7:30 p.m., in-person at the downtown branch of the Ann Arbor District Library. The programs offer a mix of nature talks and environmental activism. In addition, Sierra Club Executive Committee meetings are open to the public. They are held on Zoom, the first Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. If you are interested in the Sierra Club Executive Committee Zoom link, text me (Erica) at 734-330-0163. ■



Lobbying Sen. Slotkin's Office (Photo by Elli Gurfinkel)

Southeast Michigan Jews and Jewish Earth Alliance lobby Congress

By Bill Parkus

Members of Ann Arbor's Temple Beth Emeth Dayenu Circle and Beth Israel Congregation's Green Team joined with other Michigan Jews under the banner of the Jewish Earth Alliance on Thursday, February 13 — Tu Bishvat — to lobby Congress on climate change. The Jewish Earth Alliance is a grassroots network of 50 nonprofit Jewish organizations working together to enable Jewish citizens to engage in the policy process at the Federal level.

Our group lobbied Michigan Senators Gary Peters and Ellisa Slotkin to commit to opposing efforts of the Republican Congress to erode the progress made to reduce climate change by the last administration and Congress.

Judaism teaches us to strive for a better world and in particular to steward our Earth. As citizens we are worried about the dire consequences of climate disruption that we have seen in Florida, North Carolina, the interior of our country, and most recently California.

The group requested the Senators to commit to supporting the continuation of Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) tax credits and grants, to maintain the current U.S. EPA budget, and support passage of S.25 Polluters Pay Climate Fund Act.

The Democrats are on the defensive trying to save as much of the action made on climate change from the last administration rather than attempt new legislative efforts, which would likely be dead on arrival. The federal funding process, now under siege by the Trump administration, is going after lawfully allocated federal funds. The administration recently impounded (took back) $80 million (of federal funds) from the City of New York, a democratically led city, for migrant housing.

The Democrats are trying to determine what the priorities should be that will guide their legislative efforts until the midterm elections. They would like to hear from citizens on what we think the priorities should be. Maintaining EPA's budget is a priority. Funding is included for the Inflation Reduction Act (tax credits and grants) and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which includes federal funds for climate disruption and environmental protection activities within the Great Lakes Basin. However, cuts to the EPA budget are easier for Trump to defend than cuts under entitlements. A federal budget should be ready for discussion and action within the second quarter. The Democrats are expecting to have some leverage in the appropriation process. ■

Operation Popsicle: Mission accomplished!

By Eyal Meirovich, "Brothers and Sisters for Israel," and Amichay Findling, the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

The Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor sent out a unique solidarity mission to Israel in March 2024. During this mission, the participants had the privilege to visit the Northern Logistical Center of "Brothers and Sisters for Israel," a unique volunteer organization dedicated to assisting civilians and soldiers on the front lines in Israel, filling many gaps for which the state did not provide solutions. Brothers and Sisters for Israel uses creative thinking, impressive logistical capabilities, and a lot of good energy to solve these complex issues.

During the visit, the Ann Arbor travelers participated in hands-on activities, helping to craft portable bookcases to be delivered to front-line units stationed along the Lebanese border, created from recycled wooden crates. Doing this work, the Ann Arborites met Eyal, the volunteer manager of the Logistical Center. He is a creative and energetic individual, who shared with us his "next big thing" to make military duty easier for soldiers: an ice cream truck that can reach every location where soldiers are stationed during Israel's hot summer and provide cool refreshments, free of charge.

In 2024, the Jewish Federation's allocations committee decided to support Eyal's project and assisted in its realization. To learn more about the allocations process, visit www.JewishAnnArbor.org/about-us/community-impact. To learn more about Israel-related programming at the Federation, contact Amichay Findling at amichay@jewishannarbor.org.

This is Eyal's description of Operation Popsicle:

I would like to share with you the coolest and most delicious operation of the summer ... "Operation Popsicle."

For those who aren't familiar — "Operation Popsicle" involved a properly branded trailer converted into a kiosk, along with a decades-old ice cream freezer that was repaired repeatedly until it became a fully functional ice cream truck. It even had the classic ice cream truck music and a speaker announcing our arrival … "I'm coming!"

We distributed ice cream bars individually and in bulk, handing out full cartons to soldiers stationed on the border lines or beyond. Despite all the possible difficulties and challenges, we managed to bring a bit of sweetness to over 15,000 soldiers, as well as children from evacuated communities, making their summer a little better.

Where did we go?!

We traveled to almost every corner of the country, from north to south — the Galilee, the Golan, the coastal plain, the Jordan Valley, the hills, and especially the scorching desert.

We were in Tze'elim, Elyakim, and everywhere soldiers were training — engineering units, infantry battalions, paratroopers, and armored brigades.

We visited headquarters, staging areas, and training zones, meeting officers, support personnel, soldiers from all corps and commands.

Division commanders licked ice pops, logistics crews dripped ice cream cones. We made it to frontline and rear bases, the Gaza border area, kibbutzim, military units, and even some evacuee centers.

We handed out ice cream to troops on vehicles, those returning from operational missions, and those taking a break before heading back into Gaza. Everywhere and to everyone we could reach.

The experience

The positive experience was shared by the soldiers and all those involved in making this happen, especially those who carried it out in the field. There were amazing encounters, fascinating stories, and an outpouring of love and appreciation for our team. There were also a few difficult moments, but our people knew how to handle them with patience and understanding.

We'll keep doing everything we can to spread goodness. Have ideas? Let me know. ■

Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut: from commemoration to celebration

By Amichay Findling, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

For one evening, the Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor will transform into a unique, immersive Israel experience, where visitors can travel around Israel without leaving Ann Arbor.

On the evening of Thursday, May 1, Israel's Independence Day (Yom Ha'Atzmaut), the greater Ann Arbor Jewish community is throwing the biggest Jewish party of the season. This "Israeli Block Party" will be a fun-filled event featuring live Israeli music by the high-energy TLV Band, a community art project and Israeli artists, a "shuk-style" market for tasty food, plus a cash bar and myriad activities for adults, teenagers, and children. A free childcare option will be available as well. The event will be designed to take partygoers on a "trip through Israel," with activities to immerse in various regions of the land.

The event is being organized by a partnership between the JCC, Jewish Federation, and Hebrew Day School. Advance ticket purchase is strongly suggested. Tickets will cost $5 per person in advance, or $10 at the door. Free admission will be granted to anyone who has registered for the community trip to Israel that leaves December 2025. Visit JourneysInternational.com/ann-arbor-israel-2025 for trip details and to express interest in a personalized registration link.

Tickets for this epic community celebration are available at JewishAnnArbor.org/Events.

An opportunity for commemoration

Only two days prior to the party, the greater Ann Arbor Jewish community will gather to commemorate Israel's fallen: the soldiers, security personnel, and civilians who have lost their lives in war or in terror attacks.

April 29 is the eve of Israel's Memorial Day (Yom HaZikaron). The community is invited to gather that evening at Beth Israel Congregation for a communal ceremony. Representatives from many of Ann Arbor's Jewish organizations and congregations, as well as individual contributors, have been part of the planning and delivery of this thoughtful ceremony.

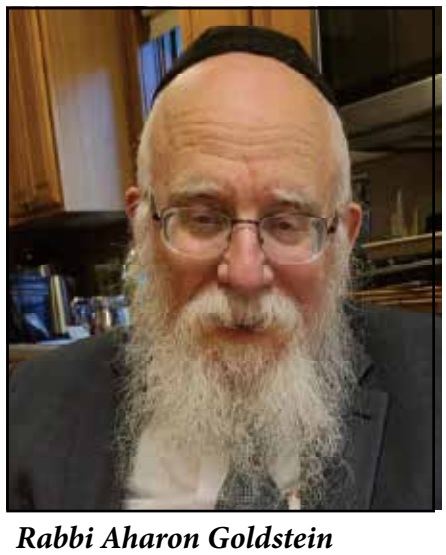
If you have a loved one, or anyone dear to you, who lost their life in Israel's struggles, please contact Federation's Israel and Overseas Program Manager Amichay Findling (amichay@jewishannarbor.org) to discuss the most proper way to commemorate them during the ceremony. Details and registration for the ceremony can be found at JewishAnnArbor.org/Events.

Israel Memorial Day (Yom HaZikaron) Commemoration Ceremony: Tuesday, April 29, 6:30 p.m. at Beth Israel Congregation

Israel Independence Day (Yom Ha'Atzmaut) Israeli Block Party: Thursday, May 1, 5–8 p.m. at the JCC of Greater Ann Arbor ■

Lessons from the Temple's sacrifices

By Rabbi Aharon Goldstein, Chabad of Ann Arbor



Rabbi Aharon Goldstein

The Torah portion Vaykra, this year read on April 5, tells us about the sacrificial offerings that were offered in the Sanctuary and later in the Temple. The sacrificial offerings were the primary service done in the Sanctuary and Temple.

The Torah is eternal, meaning that we can and should take a practical lesson from every law and story found therein, and that applies for every person, in every place, and at every time.

The main offering in the Temple was the Tamid offering. It was a daily offering brought once in the morning, before all the other sacrifices, and once again in the afternoon, after all the other sacrifices.

What lessons can we learn from the Tamid offering?

Although the Tamid was only brought in the morning and evening, its name, Tamid, means constant. If it was only brought twice a day, why was it called constant? Because although it was only brought twice a day, its effect was constant, its effects lasted all day long, so it was constant. It was the foundation for all the offerings that came after it, it influenced and affected them.

The same is true for our day. Our day consists of a number of events and tasks, physical and spiritual and we don't always see the G-dly light in them. Even the time that one spends on soul matters is flawed, because it is done from a human perspective, which is commonly wrong, and at times, could lead one astray.

What we have to do, is give ourselves over to Hashem first thing in the morning, before anything else. And that is what we do when we say, "Modeh ani lefanecha melech... I give thanks before You King..." as soon as we wake up. This is thanking G-d for returning our souls, and we call Him "King," a king is one who you give yourself completely over to, your body and even your life. It is proclaiming Hashem your King and giving yourself completely over to Him.

When one brought a sacrifice, the main things that were offered, was the blood that was sprayed on the altar, and the fat that was burned on the altar. The blood is the life force of the body, it represents the life and the passion of the person. The fat is the good stuff, it represents pleasure. What Hashem wants, is that we should give our pleasure and the our passion to Him, that we should make what He wants, our passion and our pleasure.

When you start your day with Modeh ani, all the chores of the daily grind are influenced by this proclamation, your passion and pleasure is for G-d. It's in effect, the Tamid offering of your day, and it brings blessing to you, your home and your family.

The blessings of the home will surely have a ripple effect, it will spread to all of the Jewish people, and it will hasten the coming of Moshiach, when we will once again see the Tamid being offered. May it happen soon. ■

April Calendar

Always check websites or call for updates before planning to attend anything listed here.

Tuesday 1

Wednesday 2
Yidish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group): Zoom. 2:30 p.m.

Friday 4
Candle Lighting 7:47 p.m.
Passover Sale. Women of TBE. 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
First Friday Shabbat at the JCC. JCS. www.jewishculturalsociety.org. 6:30 p.m.

Saturday 5 Vayikra
Havdallah 8:48 p.m.

Sunday 6
Passover Sale. Women of TBE. 3 to 7 p.m.
Gemini plus Emily = Gemily. At The Ark. 1 p.m.

Tuesday 8
Amster Gallery Reception for Michael Fried and Joan Cohen Jones. At the JCC. 6 p.m.

Wednesday 9
Yidish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group): Zoom. 2:30 p.m.

Thursday 10
Zell Visiting Writers Series: Ilya Kaminsky. At Literati. 5:30 p.m.

Friday 11
Candle Lighting 7:54 p.m.

Saturday 12 Tzav, Shabbat HaGadol and 1st seder of Passover
Havdallah 8:57 p.m.

Sunday 13 Passover 2nd seder

Monday 14 Day one of counting Omer

Friday 18
Cand Lighting 8:02 p.m.

Saturday 19 Passover Day 7
Havdallah 9:06 p.m.

Sunday 20 Last Day of Passover

Monday 21 Mimouna
24th Ann Arbor Jewish Film Festival! Thru May 9

Friday 25
Candle Lighting 8:10 p.m.
24th Ann Arbor Jewish Film Festival! Thru May 9
Tammy Gottlieb, Vice Chair of Women of the Wall. At Beth Israel. After Shabbat service.

Saturday 26 Shemini
Havdallah 9:15 p.m.
24th Ann Arbor Jewish Film Festival! Thru May 9
Celebration of Jewish Poetry. At TBE. 2-6 p.m.

Sunday 27
24th Ann Arbor Jewish Film Festival! Thru May 9

Monday 28 Rosh Hodesh Iyar
24th Ann Arbor Jewish Film Festival! Thru May 9

Tuesday 29 Rosh Hodesh Iyar
24th Ann Arbor Jewish Film Festival! Thru May 9

Sunday 30
24th Ann Arbor Jewish Film Festival! Thru May 9

Phone numbers, websites, and addresses of organizations frequently listed in the calendar:

Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan (AAOM): 1429 Hill Street, 248-408-3269, annarborminyan.org

Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation (AARC): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-445-1910, aarecon.org

Beth Israel Congregation (BIC): 2000 Washtenaw Ave, 734-665-9897, bethisrael-aa.org

Chabad House: 715 Hill Street, 734-995-3276, jewmich.com

Eastern Michigan University Center for Jewish Studies (EMU): www.emich.edu/jewish-studies/

Frankel Center: 202 S. Thayer St., lsa.umich.edu/judaic/

Jewish Community Center (JCC): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 745-971-0990, jccannarbor.org

Jewish Cultural Society (JCS): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-975-9872, jewishculturalsociety.org

Jewish Family Services (JFS): 2245 South State Street, 734-769-0209, jfsannarbor.org

Jewish Federation: 2939 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-677-0100, jewishannarbor.org

Pardes Hannah: 2010 Washtenaw Ave, 734-761-5324, pardeshannah.org

Temple Beth Emeth (TBE): 2309 Packard Road, 734-665-4744, templebethemeth.org

UM Hillel: 1429 Hill Street 734-769-0500, michiganhillel.org ■

It's So Easy to Feel Helpless

U.S. Citizens are Desperate for Personal Empowerment

We can easily feel helpless to address national and world chaos. Even when we try to suppress this unpleasant feeling, it can produce a haunting distress or anxiety. This emotional predicament weakens us personally and undermines the vitality of our citizenship.

The solution is to become more conscious of the self-defeating dynamics and compulsions in our psyche.

I am Peter Michaelson, a psychotherapist and author in Ann Arbor. Unconscious inner conflict permeates our psyche, and my books reveal the dynamics of this weakness. Inner conflict consists primarily of our wish to be strong versus the many ways we unconsciously generate self-doubt, inner fear, grievances, and feelings of helplessness. We become stronger by becoming conscious of the precise nature of this inner weakness.

Right now, we need truth, especially inner truth that shows why we are so often at odds (or at war) with our own self and each other. We start to recognize, for instance, how passively and defensively we react to our aggressive inner critic. We haven't been willing to recognize how compulsively we recycle and replay unresolved conflict in our psyche between a self-aggressive drive and a passive defensiveness.

For many of us, this primitive inner critic (superego) is the master of our personality. A deep passivity in us, a dark patch of nonbeing, tolerates the superego's oppressive nature and allows it to degrade our resilience and power.

How can we stand up to the world's bullies when we allow inner passivity, a knock-kneed stand-in for our better self, to represent us on this crucial inner level? How can we protect democracy when we aren't even protecting ourselves from our authoritarian inner critic?

My books bring an explicit new understanding to classical psychoanalysis. The weakness I expose reveals exactly how tyrants and degenerate political actors, the Frankenstein monsters of the superego, have been able to rise to power.

To see my list of books, enter my name in the Amazon.com search box --- or order from my website.
(My latest book will be published this summer.)

The best books to start with are:
The Phantom of the Psyche: Freeing Ourselves from Inner Passivity (2002)
Our Deadly Flaw: Healing the Inner Conflict that Cripples Us and Subverts Society (2022)
Freedom From Self-Sabotage: How to Stop Being Our Own Worst Enemy (1999)
Who's Afraid of Inner Truth: Dispatches from Our Psyche's War Zone (2017)
Why We Suffer: A Western Way to Understand and Let Go of Unhappiness (2015)

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CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor
Chabad House
ANN ARBOR ORTHODOX MINYAN
HILLEL
JCS
JFS Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County
Temple Beth Emeth

Jews and poetry: A brief introduction to a long story

by Simone Yehuda

According to a National Endowment for the Arts study, between 2012 and 2017, the rate of poetry reading among adults grew by 76%, to 28 million. More than that, the number of 18-to-24-year-olds who read poetry has more than doubled. There have also been significant increases in the number of women, Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians who read poetry.

In preparation for Temple Beth Emeth's Celebration of Jewish Poetry on April 26, the event planners thought it might be helpful to review some of the key aspects that make Jewish poetry special.

Biblical origins

Jewish poetry of course has biblical origins. Biblical psalms and The Song of Songs include some of the earliest and most influential examples of Jewish poetry found in the Hebrew scriptures. These texts are deeply lyrical, filled with metaphor, parallelism, and a strong sense of rhythm, all of which have become foundational to later Jewish poetry.

Psalm 9, the first of the acrostic Psalms, covers half of the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 10 covers the rest of the alphabet. It has a tone of victory over evil and seems to have been written to celebrate David's victory over Goliath. Psalm 139:14 ("I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made") expresses gratitude and worship towards God for creating humans in such an intricate and amazing way.

The Song of Songs, also known as the Song of Solomon, is a literary, poetic exploration of human love that strongly affirms loyalty, beauty, and sexuality. These elements shouldn't be considered ends in themselves since they're also transcendental longings, whispers of immortality, and metaphors for God's love.

Poetry and Jewish prayer

Much Jewish poetry is tied to religious practices of prayer and devotion. Piyyutim (liturgical poems) are integrated into Jewish prayers and rituals, especially during holidays and special occasions. These poems often explore themes of devotion, repentance, and the relationship between God and the Jewish people. For example, Joseph ben Solomon of Carcassonne, 11th century, was a French Jewish liturgical poet. He wrote a poem which is used as liturgy during the first Sabbath of Chanukah, taking material for this prayer from the Scroll of Antiochus, the Book of Judith, the First Book of Maccabees, and the Second Book of Maccabees. It's composed of verses of three lines each arranged in alphabetical order. This poem, mentioned by Rashi in his commentary on Ezekiel xxi. 18, became an integral part of the Ashkenazi and Italian rites in the Middle Ages.

Mystical traditions, especially the Kabbalah, have inspired poetic expressions that explore the esoteric aspects of the divine, the nature of the soul, and the cosmos. For example, in *Book of Mercy* (1984), the Montréal Jewish poet Leonard Cohen writes:

> "Sit down, Master, on the rude chair of praises, and rule my nervous heart with your great decrees of freedom. Out of time you have taken me to do my daily task. Out of mist and dust you have fashioned me to know the numberless worlds between the crown and the kingdom. In utter defeat I came to you and you received me with a sweetness I had not dared to remember. Tonight I come to you again, soiled by strategies and trapped in the loneliness of my tiny domain. Establish your law in this walled place. Let nine men come to lift me into their prayer so that I may whisper with them: Blessed be the name of the glory of the kingdom forever and forever."

Cohen often demonstrates his debt to the Jewish tradition. His melodies sometimes reveal the influence of Jewish music, especially in his chants and supplications which reflect both Ashkenazic and Sephardic liturgical rites. However, it's his poetic vision that's remarkable. In fact, "Who By Fire," a contemporary reworking of a medieval hymn, is included in a traditional Jewish prayer book for the High Holy Days. It's a solemn poem in which Cohen depicts the drama of the divine judge inscribing and signing the fate of each person for the upcoming year. The melody of his "Who By Fire" is based on the chanting of the Jewish prayer which Cohen heard in the synagogue as a boy (Leonard Cohen, *Stranger Music: Selected Poems and Songs).*

Jewish history and experience through the poet's eyes

Jewish poetry often reflects the experiences of exile, displacement, and the longing for Israel. This can be seen, for example, in the medieval poetry of Yehuda Halevi (c. 1075–1141), whose works, while often expressing a deep yearning for Israel, can also be self-reflective.

The Grey Hair, by Yehuda Halevi

One day I observed a grey hair in
my head;
I plucked it right out, when it thus to
me said:
"You may smile, if you wish,
at your treatment of me,
But a score of my friends soon will
make a mockery of you."

Jewish poets have frequently responded to historical tragedies, such as the Crusades, pogroms, and the Holocaust, through their poetry, using it as a means of mourning, protest, and memory. For instance, Emma Lazarus wrote "The New Colossus" with her experiences working with refugees on Ward's Island, specifically Jews arriving from Russia, in mind.

Jewish poetry is rich in multilingual and multicultural expressions in specifically Jewish languages such as Hebrew, Ladino (Judeo-Spanish), and Yiddish, which each have rich poetic traditions reflecting the diverse cultural environments of Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews. Looking more widely, Jewish poetry has been written in the language of the many countries. Jewish poets have often absorbed and reinterpreted the literary styles and themes of the cultures in which they lived, whether in Islamic Spain, Christian Europe, India, China, or other societies.

In modern times, Jewish poets have explored themes of identity, assimilation, resistance, and the Holocaust. Poets like Paul Celan and Yehuda Amichai have grappled with the complexities of Jewish existence in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The Place Where We Are Right, by Yehuda Amichai

From the place where we are right
Flowers will never grow
In the Spring.

The place where we are right
Is hard and trampled
Like a yard.

But doubts and loves
Dig up the world
Like a mole, a plow.

And a whisper will be heard in the place
Where the ruined
House once stood.

Jewish poetry today: Experimental, midrashic, feminist

Contemporary Jewish poetry often experiments with form, language, and subject matter, reflecting the diversity of Jewish life, from secular to religious, from diasporic to Israeli.

David Avidan, a trailblazer in modern Israeli poetry, often abandons traditional poetic forms in favor of fragmented or free-flowing structures. His "The Stain Remains on the Wall" is experimental due to its irregular line breaks and rhythms that challenge conventional reading patterns. The poem employs vivid, surreal imagery that resists easy interpretation. He blends the physical and metaphorical (a literal stain, for example, suggesting psychological scars or societal flaws), to create layered meaning. The experimental nature of this poem is its refusal to offer a clear narrative or resolution. It demands active engagement from readers, inviting multiple interpretations depending on their personal experiences and insights.

The Hebrew language itself, with its triconsonantal root structure, lends itself to wordplay, puns, and deep layers of meaning. This linguistic richness is often a feature of Jewish poetry.

Jewish poets sometimes employ techniques from midrash (interpretations plumbing the words of the Torah) using allusion, reinterpretation, and dialogue with sacred texts to create layered and complex poems. The midrashic techniques of interpretation are ancient and contemporary: for instance, in Anat Koplowitz-Brier's *Commemorating the Nameless Wives of the Bible: Midrashic Poems by Contemporary American-Jewish Women* (Bar-Ilan University, Israel, 2020). Another example is Sherri Waas Shunfenthal (b. 1956), a North Virginia poet and liturgical writer and member of Adat Reyim, a Progressive Conservative congregation. Her cycle of four poems ("Noah's Wife Speaks," "The Animals are our Friends," "Time," and "Arc of Peace") forms part of her book *Sacred Voices: Women of Genesis Speak* (Shunfenthal, 2000) in which her goal is to "breathe life into the souls of the Biblical women" and provide a "new understanding of their stories" (p. 2). At the end of her book, in a chapter entitled "Explanation and Commentary about the Women of Genesis," she notes that, "Although the Bible says that Noah was a man righteous in his time, Mrs. Noah must also have been righteous to have been saved from the flood" (pp. 79–80). While Noah heeds God's instructions "to build a house that floats," his wife is skeptical but must convince herself to trust her husband, overcoming her pragmatic reservations.

> "Noah's Wife Speaks," by Anat Koplowitz-Brier, excerpted
> … Who has ever heard of a floating
> house? Who has heard of a house
> with three floors?
> … I trust Noah. I must.
> There is nowhere for a woman to go
> alone with three sons. I stay,
> watch, work the fields
> trying to imagine a floating house.
> I must trust Noah. I must.

A reform Rabbi, Rabbi Elaine Rose Glickman (b. 1971) wrote a poem "Parashat Noach", included in *The Torah: A Women's Commentary,* that also makes Noah's wife the narrator, expresses her devastation over the perishing of her mother and sisters.

Parashat Noach, by Rabbi Elaine Rose Glickman

My mothers and sisters —
there would be no room for them.
God had been very specific,
my husband said, on this point
as on all the others —
how long, how tall, how deep
how many windows (one)
how many animals (lots)
how everyone else would die.
She later rebels, insists she won't
leave without her younger sister:
At nine, my youngest sister is brown-haired,
plain, eyes quick and curious,
lips filled with laughter and secrets.

As she speaks, however, "trying to sound

Continued on page 11

Jewish Poetry continued from page 10

fierce and certain," she understands that the forces she faces — symbolized by the power of nature — are too strong for her to resist:

> trying to sound fierce and certain
> against the darkening sky and
> gathering wind,
> I can hear my voice betray me,
> high-pitched, cracking, muted
> by thunder
> not so very far away.

Published in the *Cosmopolitan Review* in 2011, Oriana Ivy's "Mrs. Noah" also revisions this biblical story. Born in Poland, Ivy immigrated to the United States when she was 17. She leads the online San Diego Poetry Salon and authors a poetry-and-culture blog. Although she defines herself as secular, she has a love of Bible stories and a strong connection with Jewish ritual. This poem opens inside an ark permeated by the food stuffs and spices she has thought to bring aboard (Noah assuming: "We'll just catch fish"). It soon becomes clear that it's his wife who has prepared for the flood:

> **Mrs. Noah, by Oriana Ivy**
> After all I was the one
> who'd asked, "Sweetheart,
> shouldn't we be prepared?"
> And kept him awake with my dream
> of salvation in a houseboat, plied
> him with reasons, sulks,
> his favorite honey cake.
> and got what I wanted:
> three stories of gopher wood —
> a large ark is easier to keep clean.

In her midrashic reading, Ivy makes use of Zierler's "hermeneutic of displacement, offering readings of the text that displace male figures … from their position of centrality, often consigning the forefathers to the wings while shifting the foremothers to center stage" (Zierler 2004, p. 49). Rather than merely displacing Noah as the biblical narrative's protagonist, however, she substitutes the wife's voice, telling the "true story," for God's. Employing a humorous tone, she recalls Alicia Ostriker's observation that laughter constitutes the "most revolutionary weapon in literature's arsenal" (2003, p. 29). Revisioning thus turns the story "upside down": Noah's spouse is transformed from an anonymous voiceless woman into the redeemer of the world. His-story hereby becomes her-story, replacing the canonical version of scripture.

Judith Plaskow's *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective (1991) identifies two approaches Jewi*sh feminists should adopt in order to "reclaim Torah as our own" (p. 28). The first is by creating a new historiography, reconstructing Jewish memory by challenging "the traditional androcentric view of Jewish history" and thereby opening up our "understanding of [the] Jewish past" (p. 36). This involves recovering stories of exceptional women, employing archaeology or an archaeological reading of the Bible in order to resurface the way in which biblical women lived, believed, and acted, and rereading historical texts composed by Jewish women such as tkhines (petitionary prayers). The second is midrash — a traditional strategy of "imaginative exegesis and literature amplification" which "has easily lent itself to feminist use" (p. 53). Continuing (in) the ancient tradition, this act embodies a "creative imagining based on our own experience, albeit developed in dialogue with traditional texts" (p. 56).

In summary, Jewish poetry's ability to blend the sacred with the secular, the historical with the personal, and the traditional with the innovative ensures its unique place in world literature. For example, the following poem could just as easily apply to the 21st century:

> **"To be a Jew in the Twentieth Century," by Muriel Rukeyser (1944)**
> To be a Jew in the twentieth century
> is to be offered a gift. If you refuse,
> wishing to be invisible, you choose
> death of the spirit, the stone insanity.
> Accepting, take full life. Full agonies:
> Your evening deep in
> labyrinthine blood
> of those who resist, fail, and
> resist; and God
> reduced to a hostage among hostages.
> The gift is torment. Not alone the still
> torture, isolation; or torture of
> the flesh.
> That may come also. But the
> accepting wish,
> the whole and fertile spirit as
> guarantee
> for every human freedom,
> suffering to be free,
> daring to live for the impossible.

Yetzirah: A Hearth for Jewish Poetry

Something wonderful is currently happening with Jewish poetry. Yetzirah: A Hearth for Jewish Poetry is a fairly recent organization dedicated to Jewish poets and poetry. Founded by poet Jessica Jacobs, it takes its name from Jewish mysticism. According to the Kabbalah, existence is composed of four worlds. Yetzirah is the world of formation, where things that are created by men and women take their form and shape and inspire language into art. The organization coordinates poetry readings, maintains a database of Jewish poets, and helps poets working with Jewish themes identify literary journals open to publishing their work.

Officially launched in 2022, Jacobs notes that Yetzirah's groundwork was laid during the Trump era, in the aftermath of the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, when it seemed vital to have a space in which Jewish writers felt welcome to show up as their full selves, as poets and Jews. Her recently released book of poetry, *unalone: Poems in Conversation with the Book of Genesis* (Four Way Books), is a lyrical commentary on the 12 Torah portions in Genesis.

Jacobs asks: What makes a poem Jewish? "Jewish poets write Jewish poems. If you had asked me 10 years ago if my first two books were Jewish books, I would have said 'No.' But looking back at those poems, I realize I was absolutely looking through a Jewish cultural lens."

Since October 7, this community has felt even more essential. "The anti-Israel sentiment highlights trends impacting the Jewish literary world, such as the rise of antisemitism, grown more prevalent in the aftermath of Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, with individuals and groups taking sides in the conflict."

As Jehanne Dubrow adds, "The result is that Jewish creatives can feel uncomfortable in — or are sometimes even shut out of — arts spaces. There's a growing hostility toward Jewish writers in public spaces and on the page." Author of nine poetry collections (including *Taste: A Book of Small Bites,* 2022, Columbia University Press) and professor of creative writing at the University of North Texas in Denton, Dubrow will be the keynote Speaker at TBE's Celebration of Jewish Poetry on April 26. Dubrow observes that "Yetzirah has fired up the Jewish poetry community … We're seeing so many more Jewish literary events answering the need to support and mentor Jewish poets at all stages of their careers."

Countless other Jewish literary festivals and organizations showcase poetry collections, including the Jewish Book Council; Voices Israel (a space for Israeli poets who write in English); the Massachusetts-based Jewish Arts Collective, Boston Vilna Shul; and the Jewish Poetry Project of Ben Yehuda Press (which publishes contemporary poetry on Jewish themes).

For Deborah Leipziger, a Boston-based poet and founder of the 15-year-old New England Jewish Poetry Festival, "Poetry is central to Jewish liturgy and the Bible. It's part of Jewish DNA." One of her poems, "How to make challah," demonstrates her fascination with recipes and their accompanying rituals. She made challah weekly with her daughters when they were young, and came to know the recipe by heart:

> Bring the biggest bowl you have,
> large enough to contain your
> whole week.
> You'll need to wrestle with angels.
> Begin in the place of knowing,
> the place that venerates.
> *Kavannah*

Hadara Bar-Nadav is another poet associated with Yetzirah. The titular poem of her new book, *The Animal is Chemical* (Four Way Books), alludes to the global refugee crisis. Other poems address her medical trauma. She has four herniated discs which can leave her unable to walk for weeks or months at a time.

> **Ventriloquist**
> The old wound is speaking
> again through my back,
> carving its blood alphabet.

She also transformed the acknowledgements section of her book into a poetic memorial to her grandmother's 11 siblings murdered in the Holocaust, their specific causes of deaths unknown. She said it was the only way she could imagine honoring these family members. She gave them a proper burial in her prose poem "Mindfield," declaring: "No history here. No death. No sibling. Eleven who never disappeared in the Camps. I did not know them. They were never born. Eleven nameless question marks."

She praises Yetzirah for its acceptance of Jewish poets from across the political spectrum. In an effort to be inclusive, its events have showcased works reflective of different Jewish denominations and from poets at different points in their careers. The organization validates the Jewish community's collective trauma after October 7. As Jacobs adds, "We want to acknowledge the lineage of Jewish trauma, as well as the fraught ache of the present, while also celebrating Jewish joy and resilience."

"Yetzirah needed to offer insight and support," Dubrow added. "Poetry is not an art form of hot takes, but an art form of deep meditation. The Board took the time to figure out how we could support Jewish writers in a time of crisis and still be useful to all Jewish poets regardless of their political perspectives."

Under Jacobs' leadership, Yetzirah continues to build community. It launched a membership program in September 2023 and now has a subscriber list of over 1,300. Hundreds have also attended, via Zoom, the Yetzirah Reading Series, which features readings by mainstays in the Jewish poetry community such as Grace Schulman, Alan Shapiro, and Jacqueline Osherow.

Dubrow captures the spirit of Jewish poetry when she says that "A Jewish poem is full of argument and inquiry. It offers a complex vision of the world, and it doesn't necessarily have to engage with overtly Jewish subject matter. The idea that where there are two Jews, there are three opinions, is a Jewish poem, too."

A Celebration of Jewish Poetry will be at Temple Beth Emeth, on April 26 at 2 p.m. In anticipation of the celebration, we invite you to share one or two of your own poems or favorite poems with Jewish themes or by Jewish poets with us before the event. We will be posting these poems prior to the celebration in the halls of Genesis. All poems are due March 26. For more information, registration, and poetry submission, visit: templebethemeth.org/event/poetry-seminar.html ■

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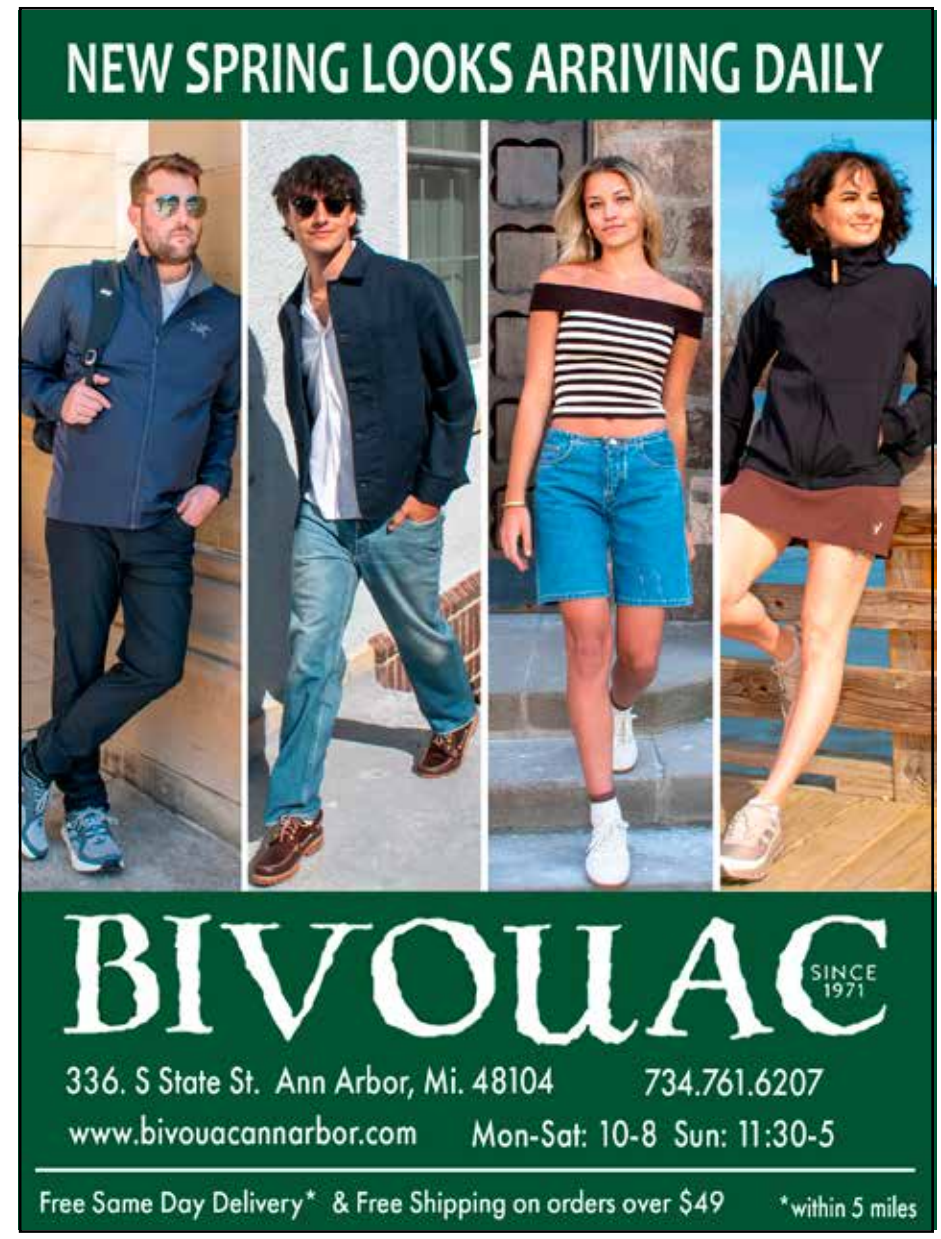
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HDS honorees continued from page 1

Josh Laufer

Hebrew music tracks with the students, getting them so excited to record and sing the songs that they still remember decades later.

After teaching at Hebrew Day school for many years, he made aliyah and now resides in Pardes Hannah in Israel with his wife and family. He continues to enrich people's lives through pluralistic Jewish education, music, and storytelling through his work at TALI (Jewish education for a pluralistic society). Josh will be flying into Ann Arbor from Israel to attend this celebration and celebrate Shabbat with our alumni families.

Rabbi Daniel Smokler will be presenting Josh Laufer with the award at the celebration. The two became close friends while teaching in Ann Arbor together.

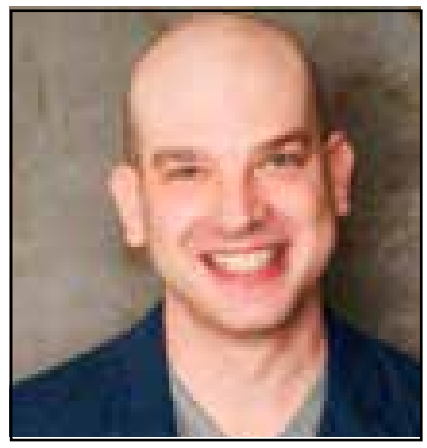
Ari Axelrod

Class of 2005)
Distinguished Alumni: Ari Axelrod (HDS

Ari Axelrod, has distinguished himself as a leading voice in the world of musical theater and Jewish artistry. Recognized by *The Jewish Week* as one of the "36 To Watch," Ari is celebrated as one of the most influential Jews in the United States. His passion for storytelling through music has earned him prestigious accolades, including the Mabel Mercer Foundation's Julie Wilson Award, the 2022 Bistro Award for Best Theatrical Artistry in Song, and just last month he was recognized as a Hero Against Hate by the Anti-Defamation League. Through his remarkable talent and dedication, Ari continues to inspire audiences and enrich the cultural landscape with his artistry.

Ari's critically acclaimed show, *A Place for Us: A Celebration of Jewish Broadway*, has captivated audiences worldwide, selling out venues and earning widespread praise. With a deep reverence for Jewish heritage and Broadway's rich history, Ari masterfully weaves together song and storytelling to honor the contributions of Jewish artists in musical theater. His work not only celebrates the past but also paves the way for future generations of performers. As we mark the 50th anniversary of HDS, we are proud to honor Ari Axelrod for his outstanding achievements and his unwavering commitment to preserving and sharing Jewish culture through music. Our school values self-awareness and expression. We believe that "when you know who you are, you can be anything" (Prizmah, center of Jewish Day Schools of North America). Ari exemplifies this sentiment, and we are so proud of him.

Distinguished Alumni: Robert Axelrod (HDS Class of 2003)



Robert Axelrod

Robert Axelrod has made a profound impact in the world of storytelling as an award-winning screenwriter and playwright. His work focuses on using narrative to illuminate and humanize contemporary Jewish life, bringing authentic and meaningful representations to the stage and screen. His talent and dedication have been recognized through prestigious fellowships with Warner Bros. Discovery, Humanitas, and the inaugural Jewish Writer Initiative's Digital Storyteller Lab. Through his powerful storytelling, Robert continues to shape the way Jewish identity and experiences are portrayed in modern media.

Robert's passion for telling Jewish stories was nurtured in the classrooms of Hebrew Day School, where he became enamored with Jewish storytelling. Today, his work is showcased at major theaters and festivals across North America, resonating with audiences far and wide. His commitment to sharing Jewish narratives ensures that these stories remain vibrant and relevant for generations to come. As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of HDS, we proudly honor Robert Axelrod for his extraordinary contributions to the arts and his enduring dedication to storytelling as a means of cultural connection and understanding.

We are so proud of each and every one of our alumni for all of the work and self-exploration that they did at Hebrew Day School and for all of that they go on to accomplish. We wish we could honor them all, and we look forward to a joyful reunion at this anniversary event.

For more information or to support Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor's 50th Anniversary Celebration, visit www.HDSAA.org/rsvp50 or call 734-971-4633 x103.

Please RSVP by 4/25, space will be limited. ■

You and your family are invited to

The Jewish Cultural Society's Community 2nd Seder!

Sunday, April 13, 2025
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www.jewishculturalsociety.org

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Feature

An ancient synagogue in Gaza brings the past into the present

By Shifra Epstein

Because of the war in Gaza, I discovered once again that history feels more immediate when current events bring past and present places, people, and events into focus. I often find myself spending a great deal of time on the internet searching for events, places, and people — military and civilian — which are central to the Israel-Hamas war.

For instance, I went into a deep dive into the ancient synagogue in Gaza. My discovery of the synagogue, which was probably built in the sixth century CE, also made me curious about the history of Jews in Gaza.

On October 8, 2023, I came across a tweet posted on X by Michael Freund, a right-wing Israeli American Orthodox Jew, a Jerusalem Post journalist, the founder and chairman of Shavei Israel organization, a supporter of Gush Emunim, and an encourager of Palestinians to leave Gaza. According to Freund, "For the first time in decades (October 8, 2023), Israeli soldiers prayed in the ancient synagogue in Gaza which was built in the sixth century and where a beautiful mosaic floor depicting King David was unearthed years ago. Jews have returned to Gaza!!"

I then discovered additional tweets, all almost copies of Freund's origin.

Apparently, none of the tweets were posted by Israeli soldiers who participated in the prayers at the synagogue. No information was given in the tweets about how the soldiers felt. According to Freund, no pictures were allowed because there are very strict instructions on documentation during combat.

I was able, however, to find a photograph posted in Yediot. In the photograph, there were soldiers wearing tefillin and tallit, standing in front of a large empty ground with their tanks parked behind them.

I became very curious about the history of this ancient synagogue.

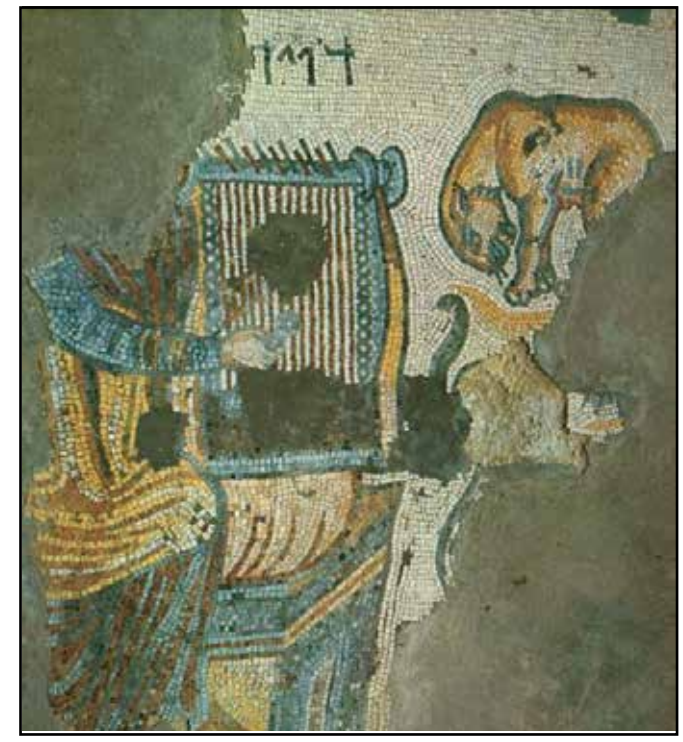
In 1965 archaeologists from the Egyptian Antiquities Authority discovered the ruins of the ancient synagogue in Gaza. The synagogue was located on the outskirts of Gaza City, near the coast, in the ancient area called "Maiuma," or El Mineh, in Gaza City's Rimal neighborhood. Two years after the discovery, based on photographs of the mosaics published in an academic journal, the Israeli archeologist Professor Michael Avi Yona of the Hebrew University discovered the word "David" in Hebrew above the figure of "Orpheus" and realized that the figure playing a harp was the figure of King David. Based on the inscriptions, Professor Yona interpreted the site as a Jewish synagogue.

The newly discovered synagogue was unusual in its size. It consisted of five levels, while the other ancient synagogues in ancient Israel had only three. The size of the synagogue testified to the great wealth of the Jewish community in Gaza in the sixth century CE.

Of the synagogue building, only the mosaic floor was preserved, and just partially. According to the remains of the floor, it seems that the structure of the synagogue was oversized: it was about 30 meters wide, about 26 meters long, oriented east-west and had five spaces, a wide central hall and two sitres (sub-wings) on each side, with these spaces apparently separated by rows of columns.

The synagogue contained two mosaics with inscriptions in Greek and Hebrew. One of the most renowned panels in the mosaic floor depicts King David, as he plays the lyre with a gathering of docile wild animals before him. King David, in the image of Orpheus from Greek mythology, was dressed in the clothes of a Byzantine emperor. He played a harp while a lion cub, a giraffe, and a snake listened to his music. Above the musical instrument is written in full spelling in Hebrew, "David."

In the main inscription of the mosaic, there is a reference in Greek to two Jewish brothers who donated money to build the synagogue: "We Menachem and Yeshua, the sons of the late Yishay,



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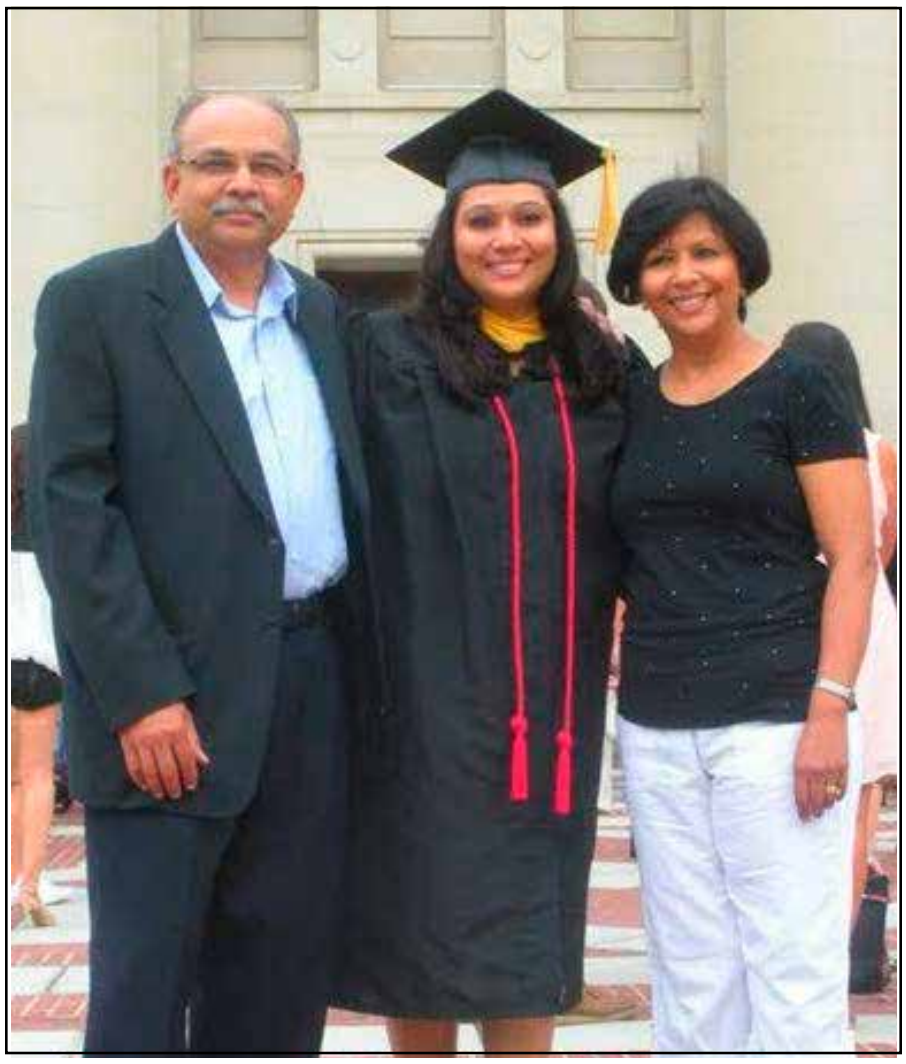


My story

By Shrina Eadeh, Senior Director of Resettlement and Integration Programs, Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County

In 2009, I joined JFS as a Bachelor of Social Work intern with very little knowledge of what refugee resettlement was. I quickly learned that resettling refugees was not just about providing shelter, food, and resources. It was about helping individuals whose lives were shattered with the foundation to live their lives with hope, support, and dignity. Throughout my internship I learned that every conversation, hand held, cake and coffee shared, every milestone, big or small, was a step toward healing. I was humbled and inspired by the clients I had the immense privilege to serve.

I left JFS and obtained my Masters in Social Work. After I graduated, I came back to JFS to work as a resettlement case manager. As my responsibilities grew, so did my understanding of the complexities of refugee resettlement. I heard stories of loss, struggle, and survival. I often thought of my own family's journey to the United States. Although my family did not arrive as refugees, they experienced similar challenges like meeting immediate needs, employment challenges, language barriers, cultural integration, racism, and discrimination. These were challenges I knew we had a responsibility to address, and I became involved with developing programs to ensure our clients' needs and goals were met.

Working at JFS has provided me with an ongoing education in empathy, perseverance, patience, and strength. It has also profoundly impacted me and enabled me to believe in the kindness, bravery, determination, and the power of our community. I have never worked for an organization that embodies as much heart and commitment as JFS does. We have big plans for the future, even if we need to put some of them on hold for now while preserving the core of our operations.

We have felt the compassion of our supporters when there has been a need, especially now more than ever. I am grateful for the trust that has been placed in me to lead our RISE programs and carry forward our unwavering mission to create solutions, promote dignity, and inspire humanity. I hope you will consider continuing to support us so that we can continue to serve our community.

To show your support of JFS, please make a donation or volunteer with us. Visit www.jfsannarbor.org to learn more. ■

TBE Events in April

Events and services are both in person and/or virtual. Please see www.templebethemeth.org for full details, location information, and links.

Tot Shabbat Service & Dinner
Fridays at 5:45 p.m.
Join the Clergy to celebrate Shabbat with fun activities, stories, songs, and age-appropriate learning for children ages 0–5. Registration requested.

Elementary Shabbat Service & Dinner (every second Friday of the month)
Fridays at 5:45 p.m.
A short service, song session, and community building! Most appropriate for children ages 5–10 and their parents, grandparents, and other adults. Everyone is welcome! Registration requested.

Wine & Cheese Shabbat Reception
Fridays at 6 p.m. (except the second Friday of each month)

Shabbat Service
Fridays at 6:30 p.m.
Every 2nd Friday at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday Shabbat service
Saturdays at 10 a.m.

Weekday morning blessings
Weekdays at 9:15 a.m.
Join TBE lay leaders each weekday morning for a short service of song, poetry, and meditation.

Twenty-five-minute mindfulness with Jewish spiritual director Linda Greene
Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m.
Zoom room opens at 8:15 a.m. for optional check-in. Blessing and intention setting 8:30–8:35 a.m. Meditate 8:35–9 a.m. Start your day centered and connected.

Queer Torah Study
Tuesdays at 7 p.m.
Join us in person or via Zoom for a discussion of queer themes in the weekly Torah portion! Led by Ari Marcotte & Ari Smith. Guest leaders welcome! Contact Ari M (ari.j.marcotte@gmail.com) for more information.

Back Door Food Pantry
Thursdays, 4 to 7 p.m.

Meditation with Claire Weiner
Thursdays at 5 p.m.
Join Claire Weiner for a 40-minute meditation session.

Lunch & Learn with Rabbi Whinston
Fridays at 12 p.m.

Shabbat morning Torah study
Saturdays at 8:50 a.m.
Join us for this weekly discussion of the Torah portion.

Weekly Mahj
Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m.
Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m.

WTBE Gift Shop Open
Wednesdays at 4: p.m. and Fridays at 5:30 p.m. | Second Friday of every month open at 6:30 p.m. Washtenaw County's only Judaica Shop!

Passover Sale
Friday, April 4, at 11 a.m.
Sunday, April 6, at 3 p.m.

Continuing Mussar
Tuesday, April 1, at 1 p.m.

Torah Trope Crash Course
Mondays, April 7, 21, and 28, at 3 p.m.

WTBE Historical Novel Reading Group
Wednesday, April 9, at 1 p.m.

Jewish Book Club
Thursdays, April 3, 10, 17, and 24, at 11 a.m.

Brotherhood Guys Night Out
Thursday, April 10, at 6 p.m.

Family Camp
Friday, April 11, at 6:45 p.m.
Family Camp provides an opportunity for families to play and learn together, for students to reinforce and share some of what they are learning in the classroom, and most importantly, to strengthen ties among students and parents/caretakers.

Community Seder
Sunday, April 13, at 5 p.m.

WTBE Fiber Arts
Monday, April 14, at 7:30 p.m.

Bereavement Group
Tuesday, April 15, at 4 p.m.
The group will have opportunities to share openly about their process of grieving and will also have topic-based readings to spark discussion.

Brotherhood Seder
Wednesday, April 16, at 5:30 p.m.

Finding Our Space of Refuge
Sunday, April 20, at 2 p.m.

A Taste of Talmud
Mondays, April 21 and 28, at 12 noon and 7 p.m.

Yom HaShoah Service
Wednesday, April 23, at 7:30 p.m.

Celebration of Jewish Poetry
Saturday, April 26, at 2 p.m.

Plant-Forward Potluck
Sunday, April 27, at 12:30 p.m.

JFS spousal caregiver support groups

Are you caring for a spouse or significant other with a chronic illness, disability, or age-related challenge who is 60-plus? If so, you may be experiencing a mix of emotions — love, dedication, exhaustion, and stress. Caregiving can be deeply rewarding, but it also comes with unique emotional and physical demands that can feel overwhelming at times. Finding support, connection, and resources is essential.

One way to navigate the challenges of caregiving is by joining the Spousal Caregiver Support Group at Jewish Family Services (JFS). These groups provide a safe space to share experiences, express emotions, and receive guidance from others who understand the journey. Educational content is facilitated by a licensed JFS Social Worker and is open to anyone who cares for their spouse or significant other. Meetings take place on the fourth Monday of each month at 5 p.m. (except in August and December) and are virtual. The 2025 meeting dates are April 28, May 26, June 23, July 28, September 22, October 27, and November 24.

Spousal caregiving can feel isolating, but you don't have to face it alone. These support groups offer emotional support, educational resources, and practical caregiving strategies. Caregivers can connect with others who truly understand their experiences, learn self-care techniques, and gain valuable knowledge from each other. Many caregivers struggle with feelings of guilt, frustration, and exhaustion. Joining a support group reminds us that we are not alone and that taking care of ourselves is just as important as caring for our loved ones.

If you are interested in joining, visit: form.jotform.com/JFSannarbor/scs to sign up. For more information, please contact Roberta Hirshon, MA, LMSW, at 207-233-1051 or robertah@jfsannarbor.org.

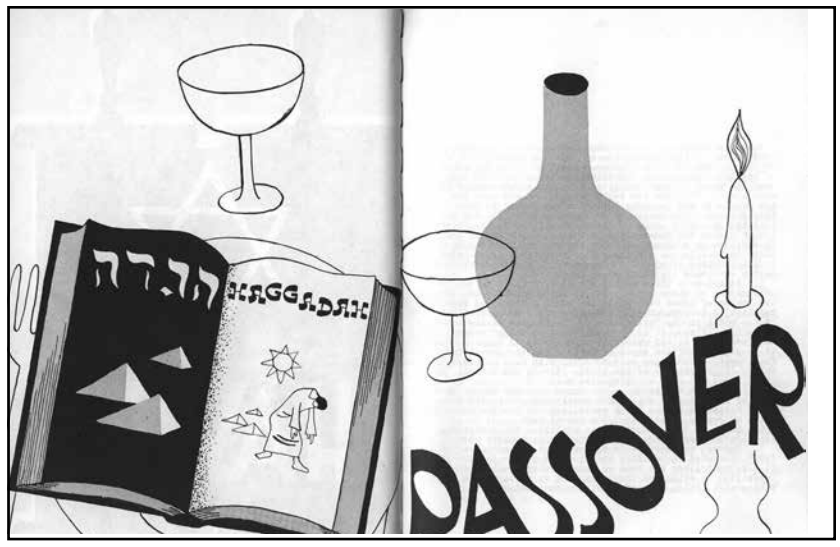
You are not just a caregiver — you are a spouse, a partner, and a person who deserves care, too. You don't have to do this alone — JFS is here for you.■

Kosher Cuisine

Recipes for the rest of Passover, not just the Seder

By Lonnie Sussman

Do you have a favorite Jewish holiday? Pesach is my favorite. All the holidays can involve large family and friend gatherings. All the holidays have traditional and symbolic foods, but Pesach has the most! All the holidays are deeply meaningful, but Pesach has the best and the most songs. All the holidays involve preparations, but none can match the amount of work that goes into this one. So, whether you are making the Seder or attending someone else's, please show your appreciation for the hosts and cooks.



Happy Pesach to everyone.

Vegetable Cutlets

The Passover Table by Susan Friedland

These are small, ¼ cup, vegetarian patties. This recipe makes about 40 but would serve 6–8 for a full meal.

You could swap out or leave off vegetables you don't like and change them up for another. I think the potatoes are critical for giving some substance to the patties, but you could use sweet potatoes or parsnips.

This would be good for a mid-week lunch or dinner, not for the seder because you want the patties to be hot.

- 1½ to 2 cups minced peppers, red, green, orange, or yellow
- 1½ cups grated carrots (4–6 carrots)
- ½ lb raw spinach, trim very coarse stems and chop. You will need about 2 cups worth. You could switch out spinach for kale, cabbage, or another green.
- 1 lb potatoes, about 3 medium-sized. You can boil them and mash to make about 2 cups or dice them into small pieces and sauté until soft.
- 1 large onion or 2 leeks grated or diced
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 cup matza meal
- 2 tbs olive oil for sautéing the peppers
- canola oil for frying

Sauté all the peppers in the olive oil until they are very soft, about 15 minutes. Add the diced potatoes if you are not boiling and mashing them. Place the sautéed vegetables in a large bowl and add the rest of the vegetables, salt and pepper, and matza meal and mix everything together. When you are ready to make the patties, take the mixture out of the refrigerator and let it come to room temperature. If you want to fry the patties, add canola oil to a pan, scoop ¼ cup of the mixture, and flatten it gently. Fry in batches for about 6 minutes on one side and flip and fry for another 3 or 4 minutes. Serve immediately. If you want to bake the patties, put them on a greased baking sheet with parchment paper with the canola oil. Bake in a 350-degree preheated oven for about 10 minutes, then turn and bake for another 7–10 minutes.

Passover Rolls

The Gourmet Jewish Cook by Judy Zeidler

Makes about 24

We called these "Bubbie Rolls" because my mom made them and now my daughter, Mira, makes them. They are great for school lunches and snacks as well as sandwiches. Some like to add a little sugar to these rolls.

- 2 cups matza meal
- 1 tbs sugar, optional
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup water
- ½ cup safflower or vegetable oil
- 4 eggs

Mix the matza meal and salt and sugar, if using, and set aside. Use a medium saucepan and bring the water and oil to a boil. Pour the matza meal/salt into the saucepan and stir until blended. Remove from the heat and into a bowl. Use an electric hand mixer and add the eggs, one at a time, and beat well after each addition. Make sure the mixture is well blended. Let the mixture rest for about 10 minutes. Heat the oven to 375 degrees and oil your hands to form the dough into 3-inch balls or ovals. Use a well-oiled baking sheet or parchment paper and place the dough about 2 inches apart. Bake about 40–50 minutes or until golden brown. Place on a rack to cool.

Artichokes with Cream Sauce

A Taste of Tradition by Ruth Sirkis

Parve, serves 6–8

I love artichokes and we usually have the small sized ones on Pesach. Here is a different presentation.

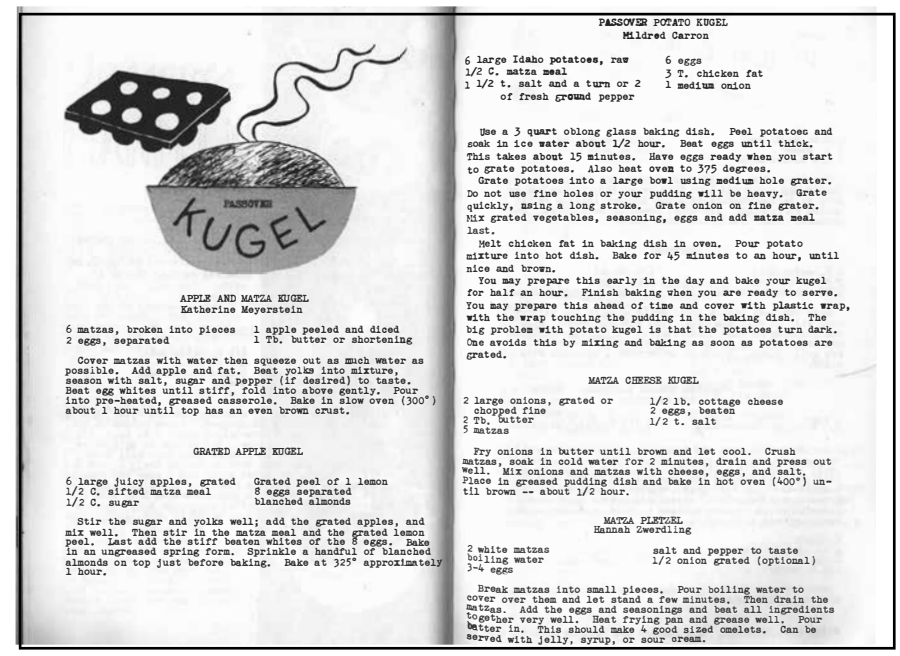
- 6–8 medium sized artichokes — remove the tough ends of the stem and the tips of the leaves. Rub the cut edges with lemon juice.
- 8 cups water
- 1 tbs salt
- 2 tbs oil
- 2 tbs lemon juice
- 1 tbs snipped parsley

Creamy Sauce

- 1½ cups mayonnaise
- 4 tbs lemon juice
- 3 tbs snipped parsley
- 1 garlic clove, mashed

Use a big stainless-steel pot for cooking.

Place the artichokes in the pot with the leaves pointing up and as close together as possible. Cover with water and add more if necessary. Add the salt, oil, and lemon juice



APPLE AND MATZA KUGEL
Katherine Meyerstein

6 matzas, broken into pieces
2 eggs, separated
1 apple peeled and diced
1 Tb. butter or shortening

Cover matzas with water then squeeze out as much water as possible. Add apple and fat. Beat yolks into mixture, season with salt, sugar and pepper (if desired) to taste. Beat egg whites until stiff, fold into above gently. Pour into pre-heated, greased casserole. Bake in slow oven (300°) about 1 hour until top has an even brown crust.

GRATED APPLE KUGEL

6 large juicy apples, grated
1/2 C. sifted matza meal
1/2 C. sugar
Grated peel of 1 lemon
8 eggs separated
blanched almonds

Stir the sugar and yolks well; add the grated apples, and mix well. Then stir in the matza meal and the grated lemon peel. Last add the stiff beaten whites of the 8 eggs. Bake in an ungreased spring form. Sprinkle a handful of blanched almonds on top just before baking. Bake at 325° approximately 1 hour.

PASSOVER POTATO KUGEL
Mildred Carron

6 large Idaho potatoes, raw
1/2 C. matza meal
1 1/2 t. salt and a turn or 2 of fresh ground pepper
6 eggs
3 T. chicken fat
1 medium onion

Use a 3 quart oblong glass baking dish. Peel potatoes and soak in ice water about 1/2 hour. Beat eggs until thick. This takes about 15 minutes. Have eggs ready when you start to grate potatoes. Also heat oven to 375 degrees.

Grate potatoes into a large bowl using medium hole grater. Do not use fine holes or your pudding will be heavy. Grate quickly, using a long stroke. Grate onion on fine grater. Mix grated vegetables, seasoning, eggs and add matza meal last.

Melt chicken fat in baking dish in oven. Pour potato mixture into hot dish. Bake for 45 minutes to an hour, until nice and brown.

You may prepare this early in the day and bake your kugel for half an hour. Finish baking when you are ready to serve. You may prepare this ahead of time and cover with plastic wrap, with the wrap touching the pudding in the baking dish. The big problem with potato kugel is that the potatoes turn dark. One avoids this by mixing and baking as soon as potatoes are grated.

MATZA CHEESE KUGEL

2 large onions, grated or chopped fine
2 Tb. butter
5 matzas
1/2 lb. cottage cheese
2 eggs, beaten
1/2 t. salt

Fry onions in butter until brown and let cool. Crush matzas, soak in cold water for 2 minutes, drain and press out well. Mix onions and matzas with cheese, eggs, and salt. Place in greased pudding dish and bake in hot oven (400°) until brown -- about 1/2 hour.

MATZA PLETZEL
Hannah Zwerdling

2 white matzas
boiling water
3-4 eggs
salt and pepper to taste
1/2 onion grated (optional)

Break matzas into small pieces. Pour boiling water to cover over them and let stand a few minutes. Then drain the matzas. Add the eggs and seasonings and beat all ingredients together very well. Heat frying pan and grease well. Pour batter in. This should make 4 good sized omelets. Can be served with jelly, syrup, or sour cream.

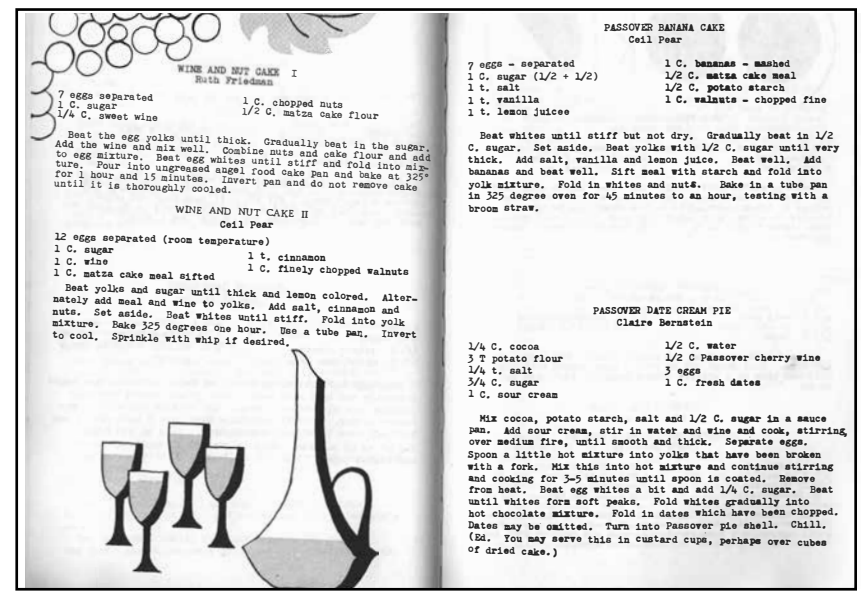
and cover the pot. Cook until an inside leaf is easily pulled off. This may take 30–40 minutes. Remove from the pot and place upside down in a colander to drain for about 15 minutes. When they cool, gently open the centers to form a cup. You will be able to remove the fuzzy "chokes" with a teaspoon or small knife. Make the sauce by mixing all the ingredients, which can be prepared earlier and placed in the refrigerator until ready to serve. If you have room, you can serve everyone their own dipping bowl. If not, place the sauce in a larger serving bowl to pass around the table. Place the artichokes on a plate with the leaves pointing up.

Passover Carrot Pudding

The Kosher Palette II from the Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy

Serves 6

There are many kugels and casseroles people make for Passover. Here is yet another.



WINE AND NUT CAKE I
Ruth Friedman

7 eggs separated
1 C. sugar
1/4 C. sweet wine
1 C. chopped nuts
1/2 C. matza cake flour

Beat the egg yolks until thick. Gradually beat in the sugar. Add the wine and mix well. Combine nuts and cake flour and add to egg mixture. Beat egg whites until stiff and fold into mixture. Pour into ungreased angel food cake pan and bake at 325° for 1 hour and 15 minutes. Invert pan and do not remove cake until it is thoroughly cooled.

WINE AND NUT CAKE II
Ceil Pear

12 eggs separated (room temperature)
1 C. sugar
1 C. wine
1 C. matza cake meal sifted
1 t. cinnamon
1 C. finely chopped walnuts

Beat yolks and sugar until thick and lemon colored. Alternately add meal and wine to yolks. Add salt, cinnamon and nuts. Set aside. Beat whites until stiff. Fold into yolk mixture. Bake 325 degrees one hour. Use a tube pan. Invert to cool. Sprinkle with whip if desired.

PASSOVER BANANA CAKE
Ceil Pear

7 eggs - separated
1 C. sugar (1/2 + 1/2)
1 t. salt
1 t. vanilla
1 t. lemon juicee
1 C. bananas - mashed
1/2 C. matza cake meal
1/2 C. potato starch
1 C. walnuts - chopped fine

Beat whites until stiff but not dry. Gradually beat in 1/2 C. sugar. Set aside. Beat yolks with 1/2 C. sugar until very thick. Add salt, vanilla and lemon juice. Beat well. Add bananas and beat well. Sift meal with starch and fold into yolk mixture. Fold in whites and nut#. Bake in a tube pan in 325 degree oven for 45 minutes to an hour, testing with a broom straw.

PASSOVER DATE CREAM PIE
Claire Bernstein

1/4 C. cocoa
3 T potato flour
1/4 t. salt
3/4 C. sugar
1 C. sour cream
1/2 C. water
1/2 C Passover cherry wine
3 eggs
1 C. fresh dates

Mix cocoa, potato starch, salt and 1/2 C. sugar in a sauce pan. Add sour cream, stir in water and wine and cook, stirring over medium fire, until smooth and thick. Separate eggs. Spoon a little hot mixture into yolks that have been broken with a fork. Mix this into hot mixture and continue stirring and cooking for 3-5 minutes until spoon is coated. Remove from heat. Beat egg whites a bit and add 1/4 C. sugar. Beat until whites form soft peaks. Fold whites gradually into hot chocolate mixture. Fold in dates which have been chopped. Dates may be omitted. Turn into Passover pie shell. Chill. (Ed. You may serve this in custard cups, perhaps over cubes of dried cake.)

- 1 pound plus 2 carrots
- ½ cup crushed pineapple, drained
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 cup matzoh meal
- 3 eggs, separated
- Pinch of salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Boil the carrots in water to cover just until tender, about 15 minutes. Then grate them into a bowl. Add the pineapple, oil, sugar, matzoh meal, egg yolks, and salt. Use an electric mixer to beat the egg whites until stiff and then gently fold them into the carrot mixture. Spoon into a 2-quart glass baking dish and bake for about 1 hour or until browned.

Banana-Nut Sponge Cake

The Gourmet Jewish Cook by Judy Zeidler

My mom made many desserts for Passover. She baked many pans of brownies, the amazing Apricot Sponge Cake, a Wine-Walnut Cake, and this Banana-Nut Sponge Cake. My brother and I thought this made a healthy breakfast. You know, lots of eggs.

- 7 eggs, separated
- 1 cup sugar
- ¾ cup matzoh meal
- ¼ cup potato starch
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup mashed bananas
- ½ cup chopped walnuts or pecans

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Using a large mixing bowl, beat the egg yolks and sugar until light in color and texture. Combine the cake meal, potato starch, and salt. Add this a little at a time to the egg yolk mixture, alternately with the bananas, beating until smooth. In another large mixing bowl, beat the egg whites until soft peaks form. Gently fold the egg whites and the nuts into the egg yolk mixture. Pour the batter into an ungreased 10-inch tube pan. Bake for 45 minutes until a toothpick inserted into the cake comes out dry and the cake is springy to the touch. Invert the pan onto a wire rack and let cool. Use a sharp knife to loosen the cake from the sides and center of the pan and unmold the cake onto a cake plate. ■

Not your average Coney Island

By Candace Bulkley and Trina Fuller

Candace and Trina became friends in the Temple Beth Emeth adult b-mitzvah class that graduated in 2022. They will be honing their palates, visiting, and writing about a variety of independent, locally owned Washtenaw County restaurants, catering to a variety of dietary preferences.

For months, we have been hearing rumblings about the food at Antonio's Coney Island in Ypsilanti. Always up to try something new, we decided to head there for brunch on a recent Saturday to see what the buzz was all about. Antonio's features Honduran food; this is not a typical Coney Island. Although you will find coney dogs and french fries on the menu, we decided to be a little more adventurous and dive deep into Honduran specialties, and that is where Antonio's menu shines.

We invited 2 guests to join us — one of them is an "I'll try anything" type diner, and the other is a little more reserved in her taste. This let us try the full range of the menu. We ordered several of their smaller items to share, and then each ordered one main dish. Our reserved eater served as our "control" and ordered a typical coney breakfast.

To start, we tried the Honduran coffee, which was rich in flavor and full bodied, without harsh bitterness, a very good cup indeed. Atole de elote is a traditional Honduran drink which was listed as a daily special. This smooth and creamy warm drink is made from corn, milk and a touch of cinnamon. The sweet taste of the corn paired beautifully with the kiss of cinnamon. The simplest of ingredients were elevated into a luxury beverage. Both the coffee and Atole de elote were served in beautiful traditional floral blue and white mugs.

Admittedly, we ordered a lot of food — there was so much we wanted to try and the prices were very affordable. The kitchen sent out dish after dish on its own, enabling us to appreciate each item without overload (which nonetheless, eventually happened).

First to arrive was the stuffed plantain. It was an interesting combination of sweet fried plantain, salty cheese, and savory refried beans topped with tangy crema, a more flavorful cousin to sour cream. For the price of $5.99 we were happy to have tried it but in the end it was not our favorite. The Super Baleada, which is a Honduran breakfast sandwich, arrived next. Fluffy scrambled egg, refried beans, slices of perfectly ripe avocado, and cheese were folded inside of an expertly grilled flour tortilla. Even our "reserved diner" was getting into the spirit of this meal. Priced at $3.99, it could have stood on its own as a filling breakfast. But we were not done yet. Next to arrive was the pupusa, a thick griddle cake made with corn masa. Several filling selections were available, but we chose the bean and cheese. Served with a tangy cabbage slaw and a spicy salsa, this humble pocket of goodness was pure comfort, all for $3.50. On to the main dishes!

Our simple-is-better diner tried the egg and cheese omelet, served with a respectable fluffy pancake and a side of hash browns. The egg and cheese omelet was declared delicious, but the hash browns were undercooked, underseasoned, and oily. The Honduran Breakfast included perfectly cooked fried eggs, sliced avocado, flour tortillas, crema, a choice of meat, and the most wonderful fried plantains. Everything on the plate was at its very best. This was a filling and delicious meal with just a twist on the typical diner breakfast. The Honduran-style enchiladas arrived with seasoned ground meat and a light-handed application of cheese on top of crispy corn tortillas. These handheld gems were delicious topped with the brightly flavored pickled vegetables, tangy slaw, hard cooked eggs, and deeply flavored salsa. By now, we were really starting to fill up, and then the star of the show arrived — it was the Pollo con Tajadas or Honduran Fried Chicken. A crispy, golden quarter chicken (we were served a leg and a thigh) was drizzled with a tangy Honduran mustard sauce served on a mountain of starchy fried green bananas and more cabbage slaw. The presentation was a sight to behold. It was a fight until the end for all of the delicious crispy bits! While the fried bananas made a great presentation, they could have benefitted some salt and being crispier.

Going into this meal, we had no preconceived expectation of Honduran cuisine. Overall, the dishes we tried at Antonio's didn't rely heavily on spices for seasoning. The food was mild and tasted very fresh. Salsas (we were served three distinct types) were served on the side for extra flavoring if desired.

There were several vegan and vegetarian options available. We were also relieved to learn that the refried beans — a staple throughout the menu — were cooked with only onion and tomato and are therefore vegan.

At the end, our friendly and helpful server asked if we wanted anything else — how could we possibly? Our expressions must have said it all because she promptly brought the check.

Antonio's is located in a strip mall halfway between Ann Arbor and downtown Ypsilanti. From the street, it blends in with the surrounding shops, but when you step inside you know you're headed into something different. Coral-colored walls festooned with Central American flags and festive decorations let you know that there are more than hot dogs and french fries here. Service is warm and friendly, and our server did her best to explain the items that were unfamiliar to us. Dietary information is elusive and requires questioning the server. Perhaps not the best choice for someone with a serious allergy. Not only is Antonio's a great dine-out value, where the pride in their food really is evident on each plate, it is also an excellent restaurant to visit for curious epicureans who are accompanying the less adventurous among us.

Antonio's Coney Island

2896 Washtenaw Ave., Ypsilanti

https://antoniosypsi.com/

(734) 905-7321 ■

Ancient Synagogue continued from page 16

wood merchants, as a sign of admiration for the most holy site, donated this mosaic in the month of Luos, year 569" (corresponding to approximately July-August of the year 508).

When Israel captured the Gaza Strip in the 1967 war, the site of the former synagogue was used as a visitor center. The center housed the mosaic of the Gaza ancient synagogue and was popular among Israelis who visited Gaza. The mosaic was permanently protected, covered with a large tarpaulin.

With the disengagement plan in 2005, the mosaic was transferred to the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem. When the Good Samaritan Museum devoted to Israeli ancient mosaic opened in 2009, the ancient mosaic floor of the synagogue was transferred there.

The artist Ayelet Azran, a former resident of Neve Dekalim in Gush Katif, created a replica of the King David mosaic as it was depicted in the ancient synagogue in Gaza. A little about Neve Dekalim: (Hebrew: lit. "Oasis of Palms") it was an Israeli settlement in the Gaza Strip. Located within the Gush Katif block of Israeli settlements in southern Gaza, it was founded in 1983. The settlement was located in between the Mediterranean Sea and the Khan Yunis refugee camp. In August 2005, Neve Dekalim was dismantled by the Israeli government in pursuit of the Disengagement Plan Implementation Law.

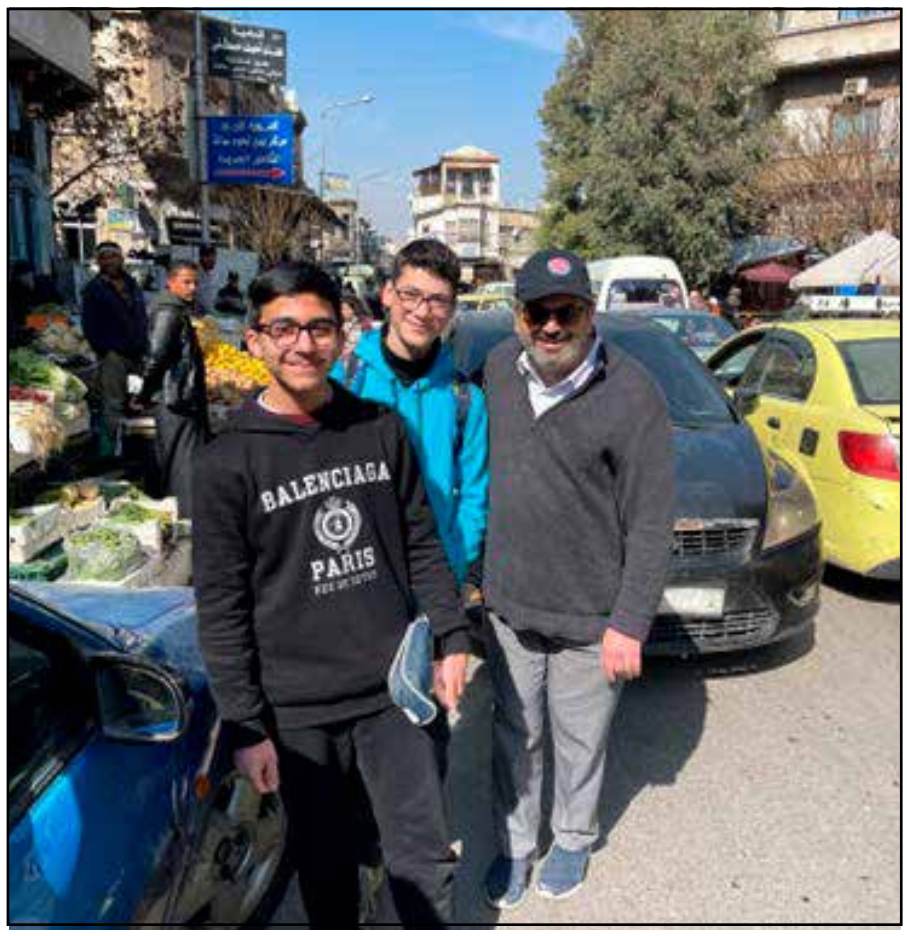
Ayelet, today a member of Kibbutz Ein Tzurim, used pieces of stone that were collected from the synagogues at Gush Katif, destroyed after the disengagement in 2005, to recreate the King David mosaic.

Early on during the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, I discovered that while war tends to overshadow everything, when something non-combative happens, such as Israeli soldiers praying in an ancient synagogue in Gaza, it can feel more striking because it exists in contrast to the violence of the war.

For me, the ancient synagogue in Gaza and the IDF soldiers praying there serve as a poignant reminder that history is not just something of the past — it continues to resonate in powerful and unexpected ways in the present.

I pray for the war in Gaza to be over and the captives to return home. I also pray for peace, hoping that when peace arrives, a synagogue accommodating all Jewish denominations will be built where the ancient synagogue once stood. ■

Fed Syrian continued from page 1



***Rabbi Asher Lopatin (R) with Damascus locals who were excited for a photo with an American Jew (Photo credit: Daniel Bucks*baum)**

overthrown, is living a dream for the moment. Everyone feels they can breathe — there is almost an air of celebration. On the flight from Doha, Qatar, to Damascus, several people — Muslims — draped themselves in the new Syrian flag and could not wait to get back home after many decades. For me as a Jewish American (with no Syrian heritage), I was so excited to see the population embracing Americans and Jews. While for much of the four-day trip to Damascus we wore hats to cover our kippot, when we did have them on and people knew we were Jewish, we experienced only warmth, excitement, a desire to connect (and take selfies), and a sense that Jews returning to Syria represents a new beginning for Syria as a whole — a time of hope for a different approach, one based on unity and support for one another, rather than scapegoating and fostering hatred and violence.

Moreover, when we had our hats on (hiding the Jewish skullcaps underneath), everyone knew we were American, and from young children to older adults, everyone welcomed us — even the taxi drivers were nice, and we shared openly that we were a Jewish delegation coming to Syria at the invitation of the government. People wanted to hang out with us, to share the love. Truly, I felt loved and cared for in Syria, and never afraid.

There is so much we do not know about this government and about the future of Syria. Is this a government that really will shed its jihadist roots for a more tolerant and unifying way? Our visit shows that that this government is at least trying to send the message that it wants to unite Syria in a way that respects all minorities, religious and otherwise. There are well over six million refugees within and without Syria to care for and bring back. Will the government focus on rebuilding Syria as a tolerant and accepting Arab country, one that sets the model for all the other Arab countries and is a beacon of hope in a difficult time? Only time will tell.

Back in Ann Arbor, I hope that my experience connecting as a Jew with my Syrian cousins in Syria will help with Jewish-Muslim and Jewish-Arab American relations. It would be pretty amazing if the new direction Syria has taken becomes the inspiration for warmer interfaith relations all over the world — including right here in Washtenaw County! ■

Beth Israel April events

Everyone is welcome to join Beth Israel for services, classes, and events. Services are being held in person and virtually, unless otherwise noted on the calendar. Below is a list of the links to participate virtually in services at Beth Israel. Beth Israel is live streaming services on the Beth Israel YouTube channel (Beth Israel Congregation AA MI). All links are also available on the Beth Israel homepage (www.bethisrael-aa.org). Please note that passwords are used. Contact the office to get the passwords at office@bethisrael-aa.org.

Hebrew Classes return on March 31!

March 31, April 7, April 21, April 28, May 12, May 19, May 26, June 9, June 16

6–6:45 p.m. The Fundamentals of Reading Hebrew: Learn the basic principles of reading in Hebrew, practice fluency, and develop confidence when reading Hebrew. (Texts in class will include prayers, biblical verses, and modern passages.)

7–7:45 p.m. Conversational Modern Hebrew for Beginners Plus: Develop your budding conversational skills, enjoy using Hebrew in an authentic way.

8–8:45 p.m. Advanced Conversational: If you can have a conversation in Hebrew, this class is for you! Improve your fluency, expand your vocabulary, and enjoy using Hebrew naturally.

Member price $125, non-member price $180. For questions please contact Barb McAnelly at barbm@bethisrael-aa.org. For scholarship requests, please contact Jerry Sorokin at gsorokin@bethisrael-aa.org. Registration is available on the Beth Israel website (www.bethisrael-aa.org).

Passover Seder Kids' Experience

Sunday, April 6, at 10 a.m.

Everyone is welcome to join BIRS families for this annual Pesach celebration. Kids and adults will build cities for Pharoah, demand our freedom, experience the plagues, shelter in tents (with glowsticks), pack for the first Seder, and cross the Red Sea.

A Taste of Mussar

Sunday, April 6, at 12:30 p.m.

How would you like to learn more about yourself, what makes you you, and what steps you can take to become your best self? What if you could acquire tools that would help you lead a more meaningful life? And what if you could do all this with the support of others in the community who are also interested in embarking on this spiritual journey. Then please join us for a one-hour experience of Mussar, a spiritual practice based on Jewish sources that focuses on helping you become your best self. Following the session, those interested will have the opportunity to sign up for an intensive program of Mussar learning and practice beginning in May. Enrollment is limited. Registration is on the BIC website.

Talmud Study with Rabbi Dobrusin (via Zoom)

Monday April 7, at 4 p.m.

The class meets on Zoom on Monday afternoons from 4–5:15 beginning February 3. We will read the text in the original Hebrew or Aramaic with an accompanying English translation and discuss the text in English. No familiarity with Hebrew or prior experience studying Talmud is required. This winter and spring, we will study from chapter 1 of the tractate Megillah, which deals with laws and traditions relating to the reading of the Megillah on Purim, but addresses many different subjects including midrashim on the book of Esther and traditions relating to the reading of the Torah, among others. All are welcome! Zoom link is on the BIC website.

Camp Style Shabbat Dinner and Service

Friday, April 11, at 5:45 p.m.

Join us for Camp Style Shabbat. This is a family-friendly dinner and service for all featuring Rav Nadav and music by Rachel Lawrence-Lupton. Dinner begins at 5:45 with the service to follow. RSVP on the BIC website (www.bethisrael-aa.org).

Pesach Services at Beth Israel

Siyyum Ta'anit Bechorot

Thursday, April 10, at 7:30 a.m.

Pesach Morning Services

Sunday, April 13, at 9:30 a.m.

Monday, April 14, at 9:30 a.m.

Saturday, April 19, at 9:30 a.m.

Sunday, April 20, at 9:30 a.m. with Yizkor

Aura of Kabbalat Shabbat

Friday, April 18, at 6 p.m.

A Jewish Renewal-inspired singing service led by Rabbi Aura Ahuvia. The choir, dubbed the "Holy Levites," will be holding a rehearsal at 5:30 p.m. leading right up to and seamlessly into services. All are welcome to attend.

Erev Yom Hashoah Service

Wednesday, April 23, at 7:30 p.m.

Join us as we light candles, recite prayers, read from the Shoah scroll, honor the memory of the six million, and say Kaddish together in remembrance.

7:30 p.m.

ISRAEL360 Presents: Tammy Gottlieb, Women of the Wall, "Let Me Hear Thy Voice"

Friday, April 25, at 7 p.m.

Please join us for services on Friday night at 6 pm. After services, Tammy Gottlieb, Vice Chairwoman of Women of the Wall, joins us to speak about her experiences as a leading Israeli activist fighting for equality and democracy in the Jewish state. Register on the BIC website. Tammy Gottlieb is the Vice Chairwoman of Women of the Wall which fights for the right of women from all denominations to pray according to their custom at the Kotel. Tammy is also a member of the World Zionist Organization Executive representing the global Masorti/Conservative Movement as well as Director of Signing Anew, an Israeli NGO that supports social action organizations that work to promote the democratic values espoused in Israel's Declaration of Independence. Tammy also serves on the governing body of the WZO's Hostages and Hostage Families Directorate, which oversees the implementation of official Israeli government programs serving returned hostages and hostages' families. Throughout her entire career, Tammy has worked to shape a Jewish and democratic Israel that's a welcoming home for every Jew. Raised and educated in a Masorti congregation in Rehovot, Tammy served as a combat soldier in the IDF's Caracal Battalion back when few women joined combat units. She then worked as a senior manager in the Masorti Movement's NOAM youth group as well as a senior executive with the Masorti Movement in Israel. Now residing in Jerusalem, Tammy holds a BS in Political Science and Communications from Bar Ilan University.

Tekes Yom Hazikaron

Tuesday, April 29, at 6:30 p.m.

Community-wide ceremony on Israel's remembrance day for fallen soldiers and victims of terrorism. Representatives of congregations and Jewish organizations around Ann Arbor will share prayers, music, and memorials.

Youth Services (Tot Shabbat & Mini Minyan)

Saturday, April 5, at 11 a.m., Tot Shabbat Only

Saturday, April 26, at 11 a.m.

Preschoolers begin to learn and love Judaism through storytelling, singing, and hands-on activities. Families join for songs, stories, and more in an interactive service for tots. Tot Shabbats are led by either Katie Shelef or John McLaughlin. Mini Minyan is a slower learner's service for elementary school age children. The service will include Shabbat prayers and a "D'var and Discussion" in place of the Torah service. Mini Minyan is led by the Youth and Family Director Ben Brent.

Youth Group Events in April

Chaverim (third–fifth grade)

Chaverim Event

Sunday, April 27, at 12:15 p.m.

Gesher (sixth–eighth grade)

Exodus the Room!

Wednesday, April 16, at 6:15 p.m.

Hangout After Services

Saturday, April 26, at 12 p.m.

Theology Book Club — Online

Wednesdays at 7 p.m.

Beth Israel Congregation's Theology Book Club welcomes you to join them to read together and discuss books on Jewish thought and beliefs. The books are in English. Contact Paul Shifrin at (248) 514-7276 for more information.

In Person and Online Services

Minyan

Sundays at 9:30 a.m. in the M&M Chapel and online

Sundays at 7:30 p.m. online only

Mondays at 7:30 p.m. online only

Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. online only

Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. online only

Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. online only

Friday Evening Services — in person and virtual

Kabbalat Shabbat Service at 6 p.m.

Shabbat Morning Services — in person and virtual

Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. ■

After more than 500 days of war, these dancers have been literally and figuratively climbing the walls

By Stav Ziv. This story was originally published in the Forward. To get the Forward's free email newsletters delivered to your inbox, go to https://forward.com/newsletter-signup/.

Watching Batsheva Dance Company perform Ohad Naharin's MOMO is like seeing two worlds animated in the same space, one transposed over the other to create a singular work of art as beautiful as it is bizarre.

In one world, four men dressed only in gray cargo pants appear in a tight clump in an upstage corner while the house lights are still on. They embark on a slow walk across the back of the stage before the audience even realizes the show has begun. By the time they reach the other side and turn to walk directly toward the audience, their quiet motion has silenced the room.

These four move in sync. Sometimes they are literally connected, arms entwined, hand placed on the next guy's shoulders, lifting one another, or pulling against each other in a delicate counterbalance. Even when they're apart, they appear to be linked by an invisible force. They step together. They rotate together. They fall, rise, and climb together.

In the other world, seven dancers enter in turn until they populate the stage. Each one is dressed slightly differently, moves in their own peculiar way, and interprets the music with their own gestural lilt.

Both groups use the breadth, depth, and eventually the height of the stage. But it's as though the four can't see the seven and vice versa. There are near misses when one group's movement pattern threatens to collide with the other's. But for the better part of 70 minutes, the four and the seven inhabit the same space without ever appearing to notice each other.

To ascribe one intended meaning or narrative to MOMO is to misunderstand Naharin and his choreography. Formerly the artistic director of Batsheva from 1990 to 2018, Naharin elevated the company to its international stature, and is now its house choreographer. He is not one to provide neat plots or pat takeaways.

Did I see four boy men being sent off to fight in a war, trauma bonded into a tight-knit pack, because that's what Naharin had in mind? Did I see two worlds' worth of grief and despair because that's what he wanted to convey?

Maybe that's what I saw last week because we live in a post-October 7 world. Or because the deafening protests that follow this renowned Israeli company wherever it goes — certainly now — made for a chaotic entry into the theater that put the months and years and decades of conflict front of mind. Sold-out crowds funneled and squeezed through two small doors as protesters banged instruments and chanted slogans: "They whitewash, we protest! Boycott, sanction, and divest!" and "Dance dance for liberation! Down down with occupation!" as well as frequent calls to "Free Palestine!"

The whole scene was corralled by police and patrons were greeted by two layers of security — peering into bags and scanning each ticket holder up and down with a wand. The anxiety in the air felt more reminiscent of stepping onto a bus in Tel Aviv in 2003 than walking into a theater in Brooklyn on a typical day in 2025.

It was probably 20 minutes past the scheduled start and we were barely in our seats, the room still buzzing with nervous energy, when the four appeared onstage. So it seems implausible for the events of the last year and a half not to color the experience. MOMO premiered in Tel Aviv in December 2022, though, nearly a year before October 7. Not that that was the beginning of the wars or suffering.

But I can imagine reading MOMO — a title as enigmatic and open to interpretation as the dance itself — differently in another time and place. Or any viewer seeing their own story in it, like a meditation on incarceration and freedom, as my friend suggested after the opening night performance, which received a thunderous standing ovation. It's about nothing and everything all at once.

If there is a new literalism plaguing today's movies, as Namwali Serpell wrote in a *New Yorker* piece that happened to be published during Batsheva's Brooklyn run, Naharin's works are quintessential counterexamples. His anti-literal dances are challenging and confusing and deeply, profoundly weird — in the best possible way.

Naharin is a master of movement that makes you feel, of crafting an emotional arc that, in the case of MOMO, builds so slowly and unobtrusively you don't quite realize it's happening until it hits you in the face, the gut, the lungs, the tear ducts. You may not understand precisely what you feel or why you feel it, but you don't have to.

These dancers more than rise to the occasion. They have both supreme freedom in and control of their bodies. There are no unintentional stutters in their steps. They extend and hold until the exact moment they're ready to continue with perfectly smooth, articulated movements, just as easily as they toss their limbs or collapse on the ground or let a frenetic groove reverberate through their torso or hips. They're saying precisely what they mean, and their vocabulary is immense.

At one point, a dancer places a barre on the diagonal at center stage. Another steps up to it like she might be getting ready for a ballet class. But then she breaks all the rules, hanging off it upside down or hooking a foot and an elbow and arching her body around it with the same control she has when upright. She looks like she's floating serenely through space, unencumbered by gravity.

The rest of the seven join her at several more barres placed on diagonals around the stage. They execute a frenzy of steps, like a hallucination of a ballet class in an alternate reality, punctuated by long moments of stillness. One of the most stressful demands you could make of a dancer onstage is to walk. Just walk. Even more strenuous is to do nothing. Be still.

These superb artists do both on multiple occasions. Three, four, five seconds of standing and breathing. Minutes — what must have felt like hours to the performers — sitting on barely-there ledges jutting out of the wall at the back of the stage.

Throughout the piece, the seven periodically put one arm up high, palm facing out, like a child raising their hand in class or a repeated, unrelenting roll call. The gesture always anticipates a bass note, like a heartbeat. It becomes increasingly frequent, then insistent, until the dancers, scattered around the stage, can do nothing else but heed its call over and over and over, faster and faster and faster. If it's a heartbeat, it's racing. Arm up. Arm up. Arm up. Boom. Boom. Boom. Then all of a sudden it's in their bodies. Every time it sounds, they jerk as though startled, jostled by a series of hits and aftershocks that might never subside. Until all at once they do, and the dancers are perfectly still again.

There are only a couple of moments when the membrane between the disparate worlds of the four and the seven seems permeable. Quite late in the piece, the four stand spread out along the front lip of the stage. The seven join, walking up to fill in the spaces between them. For the first and only time all night, 11 are moving together.

They stand in a line, rotating slowly in unison. A step out on one foot, a step closed with the other. Facing side and then back and then side and then front. Again and again and again. The revolutions become meditative, almost hypnotic. One by one, the seven stop to do their own movement or make a gesture or mouth something silent and incomprehensible, before returning to their rotations.

When it's his turn, the dancer on one end faces out toward the audience, leans forward, cups his hands around his mouth, and yells what sounds like "Heyyyyy," sending the syllable out into the cavernous theater. It echoed in my mind. Anyone out there? Can you hear me?! Hello???

They seem stuck. In roles and patterns and worlds they didn't necessarily pick and can't easily shed. Knowing that Naharin trusts his audiences enough not to be prescriptive or didactic, it would be a fool's errand to assign an allegorical meaning to every movement, motif, and choreographic choice.

But it's also impossible to imagine that the pain of Israelis and Palestinians hasn't left its mark on these artists and their art. "All of us at Batsheva are currently in an abyss of sadness witnessing the ongoing conflict," Naharin writes in a program note made available after the show. His message is a statement of faith in "the power of art and particularly dance in the face of cruelty, ignorance, and the abuse of power" — with a barely veiled dig at a government and army he hasn't been shy to criticize — more than a comment on the topic of this particular work.

"The belief that inflicting ongoing, immense harm on others and fostering a constant sense of danger is a key to survival, or a sign of strength and power, is a false belief, as years upon years will testify," he writes.

There's an expression in Hebrew that translates literally to "climbing on the walls." In MOMO, the dancers do just that. First it's the four, revealing to the audience that the backdrop serves another purpose. Four torsos, slick with sweat, are illuminated like a memorial in the making, or a memorial come to life. At the end, the seven climb up and then traverse sideways across the width of the wall, disappearing around the back one by one as the men skip march offstage and the house goes black.

The expression means "going crazy," feeling trapped in a space or situation with no way out and nothing to do except be driven up a wall in desperation. Experiencing MOMO after more than 500 days of war, in the wake of tens of thousands of deaths, with a ceasefire and hostage deal in limbo, and with protesters outside, it was hard not to conjure this expression and read something timely into it.

Stav Ziv is a journalist based in New York City whose work has also appeared in Dance Magazine, The Atlantic, and Newsday. She was previously a staff writer at Newsweek and the deputy editor at The Muse. ■

The Far East Club

By Nadav Shaari

As a poker chip collector for 15 years, I recently stumbled upon one of Akron, Ohio's most colorful Prohibition-Era tales. The journey began when I purchased two peculiar poker chips. Each was marked with a Star of David and the words "Far East." These unique pieces turned out to be the first clues in a fascinating historical puzzle that led me to secret casinos, colorful characters, and a vibrant slice of Jewish American life in 1920s

Ohio.

While Al Capone made headlines in Chicago and the Jewish Purple Gang ruled Detroit's underworld, Akron had its own, albeit smaller, touch of organized mischief. The city was thriving as an industrial hub, thanks to its booming rubber industry. Amid this prosperity, a diverse immigrant population, including a close-knit Jewish community, sought opportunities in the American Midwest.

Prohibition, enacted in 1920, transformed America's social fabric. Though the law banned alcohol, it inadvertently fueled an underground economy of speakeasies, gambling dens, and secret social clubs. For immigrant communities often sidelined by mainstream society, these establishments became more than places of entertainment. They served as vital social spaces where cultural identities were preserved and community bonds strengthened.

Through my research, I discovered that the Far East Club, operated by Russian-Jewish immigrant brothers Bennie and Hymie Milkman, was no ordinary speakeasy. It showcased immigrant ingenuity with a twist of Jewish humor. Originally located at 127 S. Main Street in Akron, the club later moved to a hidden backroom in Bennie Milkman's discount dress shop, or "schmatta store," on Akron's east side, lending the establishment its clever name.

Finding these poker chips felt like uncovering a historical treasure map. Each clue unraveled another layer of this captivating story. My investigation into the Far East Club took me through archives, including countless issues of the *Akron Beacon Journal* from the 1920s and 1930s. But the breakthrough came from an unexpected source, the local Akron Jewish community, which still carried memories of this hidden history.

Meeting Lois was a turning point. Just days before my planned trip to Akron to research my chips, I reached out to local synagogues. Through an executive director named Erin Katz, I connected with Lois, a spirited 92-year-old with the energy of someone decades younger. She offered a direct link to this hidden history: her uncle, Morris "Mickey" Rubenstein, had been one of the club's card dealers and quite the character.

"Uncle Mickey was always the sharp dresser," Lois told me with a laugh. "He married a tall, blonde showgirl named Pauline, carried cards everywhere for impromptu tricks, and would mysteriously appear at my mother's house to store cash, though we never quite knew where it came from!"

In my research, I discovered that Mickey's story exemplifies the complex nature of immigrant life in early 20th century America. During his naturalization ceremony in September 1935, he was the only person among 108 immigrants denied citizenship that day, reported in the *Akron Beacon Journal*. Judge Carl C. Hoyt told Mickey he must "give up his gambling rackets or give up his notion of becoming a citizen." Mickey's quick witty reply of "When shall I start?" was met with the judge's stern response: "As far as I'm concerned, you can start right now." The ceremony itself provided a fascinating snapshot of Akron's cultural landscape and the immigration policies of the era. Each immigrant had to formally renounce their former allegiance — 22 to King George V of England, 11 to Italy's Victor Emmanuel, and 12 German citizens to Adolf Hitler. Undeterred by this setback, Mickey went on to deal not only at the Far East Club but also at high-stakes games in the prestigious Mayflower Hotel. His story reflects the delicate balance

many immigrants struck between assimilation and maintaining their own economic and social networks.

Through my investigation, I learned that the Milkman brothers themselves were fascinating figures. Bennie, the more public face of the operation, maintained his legitimate dress shop business while orchestrating the hidden casino. Hymie worked more behind the scenes, helping to manage the gambling operations. Both showed remarkable business acumen and an understanding of their community's needs.

As I pieced together the story, I found that the Far East Club was more than just a gambling den, it was a sanctuary during a time when antisemitism and Prohibition limited social options. The establishment could accommodate around 100 patrons, offering slot machines and table games to primarily Jewish blue-collar workers looking for a taste of excitement.

At dinner the next evening after our meeting, Lois shared my research on the Far East Club with her 100-year-old friend, a former bookkeeper at the neighboring jewelry store. When she learned what had operated just next door, her eyes widened in disbelief. "There was what next door?!" she exclaimed, her astonishment a testament to how well the secret had been kept. That level of discretion wasn't just impressive, it was vital. In an era when both gambling and alcohol were banned, keeping things under wraps was the only way the club could survive.

My research revealed that the club's run came to a dramatic end in 1938 when police raided the establishment. The *Akron Beacon Journal's* June 7, 1938, front page blared, "Officers' Axes Wreck Joint." Accompanying the article was a photograph of two officers smashing a dice table, with the story detailing how other gambling equipment was reduced to a pile of kindling on the floor. One operator was arrested, loaded onto a patrol wagon, and taken to jail, while 100 patrons were detained and later released.

True to form, the savvy Milkman brothers were nowhere to be found during the raid, as the Akron Beacon Journal also noted. They always managed to stay one step ahead.

Police records from the time reveal a complicated relationship between law enforcement and immigrant communities. While gambling was illegal, many officers understood the role these establishments played in community life. The Far East Club's long operation suggests a degree of tolerance, possibly aided by the Milkman brothers' careful management and community standing.

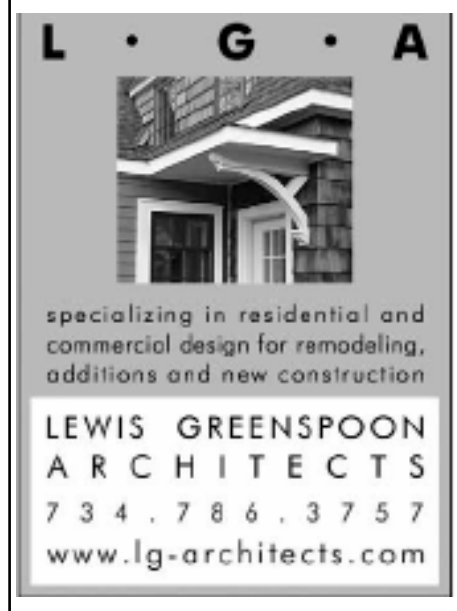
Through my research, I've found that the Far East Club's story provides valuable insights into how immigrant communities navigated Prohibition-era America. While similar establishments existed in larger cities, the Akron operation's distinctly Jewish character and its deep community connections make it a unique case study in American Jewish history.

This slice of history might have remained buried if not for those distinctive poker chips. Through my collaboration with the Akron Police Museum, local Jewish residents of Akron (thank you Lois and Erin!), and extensive archival research, a remarkable story of immigrant enterprise has emerged from the shadows of Prohibition-era Ohio.

It's amazing how a simple poker chip can tell such a rich story. This wasn't just about gambling — it was about community, resilience, and finding joy during tough times. And sometimes, as the Milkman brothers proved, you had to be a little crafty to make it all work.

The Far East Club may be long gone, but its legacy lives on through these stories, reminding us that even in challenging times, communities find ways to not only survive but to thrive — with a healthy dose of chutzpah thrown in for good measure. As modern America continues to grapple with questions of immigration, community, and social inclusion, the story of the Far East Club offers valuable perspectives on how previous generations navigated similar challenges.

You can reach Nadav at webuypokerchips@gmail.com. ■



It can't happen here, or can it?

By Barry Checkoway

Ann Arbor is both a special place in which to live, and also a place experiencing increasing incidents of antisemitism.

From our window, we can see children who are happily playing in the leaves which have fallen from the trees, and who tomorrow will be walking to school with their friends. Then college students will be jogging to campus, and parents will be heading downtown for coffee. Our street has its own "ballet of order."

Our neighborhood has tree-lined streets and older homes, in the heart of which is a park and elementary school to which the children can safely walk. The park is framed by a circle of large trees and walking paths which were the original horse racing track, county fairgrounds, and trolley terminal. There are baseball and softball games in the summer, ice skating and hockey games in the winter, a neighborhood theatre troupe, and concerts by local musicians.

One residential block in our area was designed by Frederick Law Olmstead and the Olmstead Brothers, who also designed the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, and another was home to young John Dewey, then a philosophy professor, before leaving for Chicago, where he wrote about public schools at the center of communities, as a way for democracy to flourish.

Ann Arbor regularly receives recognition as one of the "best places to live" for its quality of life, and recently received an award for becoming "one of the most peaceful places in the nation." Some residents refer to "a perfect blend of small-town charm and big-city amenities."

Near our house, however, is a synagogue whose members are confronted by protestors with anti-Israel and antisemitic signs, while family members enter the building, for Sabbath services and Sunday School, under the watchful eyes of armed guards at the front door. The guards are there for fear of antisemitism, and the dangers it poses.

Some synagogue members work with a Jewish social agency which recently organized a "walk around the park" to support their work in resettling refugees, and the walk was protected by three armed guards.

In Ann Arbor, there are increasing signs of antisemitism, such as Nazi swastikas painted on a central landmark, and antisemitic flyers posted on trees in the vicinity of the synagogue. The flyers — which call Jewish teachings "Satanic" — were left by a white supremacist hate group who identify themselves as "Jew haters." In a nearby town, residents are waving flags with swastikas and chanting Nazi slogans, in front of a theater presenting *The Diary of Anne Frank*, about the Jewish girl who was hidden with her family in a neighbor's attic during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands.

In Michigan, the Anti-Defamation League reports that the number of white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups — and incidents of antisemitic assaults, harassment, vandalism, and violence — have reached an all-time high statewide. Hate group members have threatened violence against Jewish congregants in synagogue parking lots, spray-painted swastikas on buildings, destroyed menorahs outside cultural centers, and warned of mass shootings and "Michigan Kristallnacht" with threats to murder Jews and burn their homes. They have posted antisemitic flyers on front doors in Farmington Hills, Northville, West Bloomfield, Bloomfield Hills, and other places.

Down the street, the University of Michigan is experiencing an increase in antisemitic incidents, and Jewish students have been the targets of intimidation and harassment, including antisemitic tropes on the doors of their dormitory rooms. White supremacist groups distribute antisemitic and anti-Israel fliers on campus, and rising antisemitism has been intensified by pro-Palestinian protesters.

Indeed, the protestors have disrupted official proceedings, occupied buildings, and marched across campus, carrying signs with anti-Israel and antisemitic messages. They do not seem to distinguish between protest against Israel, and antisemitism against Jews. These things should be distinguished, but when they are not, they are antisemitism.

Barry Checkoway

Protesters have spray-painted the university president's campus residence and sidewalks with "intifada" and held late-night demonstrations outside the private homes of university regents, placing fake bloody body bags on their lawns and tacking lists of demands to their front doors. They vandalized the offices of one Jewish regent, and then his home during the night. He was awakened from sleep to the sound of shattering glass, went downstairs to find that they had smashed the windows on the first floor, and spray-painted anti-Israel and antisemitic messages on his car in the garage, while his children were sleeping upstairs.

Although most Jewish students report that they do not directly experience antisemitism, some of them say that they feel unsafe about walking on campus. Students have formed a buddy system so that classmates can walk them to and from classes, and the university has hired more security guards to protect them.

The University of Michigan has been a hub for Jewish students since the early 20th century, when they applied here, after Harvard and other private institutions used quotas to limit Jewish admissions. Today, Jewish students flourish — albeit under the watchful eyes of campus security — and later take leadership positions in society. Indeed, it is no surprise that an institution that prepares young Jews for national leadership might be targeted by people who hate them.

We grew up in a small American town in New England which was primarily Christian, and we belonged to a Jewish synagogue with a tiny membership of forty families. Our family attended religious services, observed Jewish holidays, and identified with Jewish culture, rather than strictly adhering to religious laws and formal practices, although my grandparents were Orthodox and kept kosher.

Our town was picture-perfect. It featured colonial houses built in the 1600s, and Federal-style houses built by sea captains along the High Street, and roads which went by clam shanties en route to the ocean. There was a strong presence of churches whose religious practices were integrated into local culture, and emphasis on Christian values within the community life. Christmas holidays featured a special choreography, with its own activities, sounds of choral music, and snow flurries falling onto the cobblestone streets at night. Overall, I adapted to the majority culture.

Our ancestors fled Eastern European to escape the Russian pogroms and organized violence against the Jews. Our grandparents did not talk about the Old Country from which they fled but always talked about America as a place of refuge from oppression.

Growing up, we learned about Kristallnacht, the time when Nazi stormtroopers went street-by-street to destroy Jewish synagogues and prayer rooms. Then, they went house-by-house, forced open the doors of Jewish homes, which were identified by their mezuzahs and by neighbors, who told authorities where they were living. Jewish families were arrested and taken away to concentration camps where they were killed in mass shootings and gas chambers, while we were living in our small town in New England.

I am reminded of *It Can't Happen Here*, a cautionary novel written by Sinclair Lewis in the 1930s, when Hitler was rising in power. The novel is set at an idyllic boys' boarding school in New England and describes the rise to power of a demagogue — an allusion to Hitler — who is elected president and becomes the country's first outright self-proclaimed dictator. During his campaign, he promises to "make our country great again" and restore its loyalty and patriotism.

The novel describes how he exploits economic turmoil to gain power, dismantling democratic institutions and suppressing dissent. These measures draw the ire of other leaders and legislators, who protest these actions, but the military responds harshly and attacks protest demonstrators with weapons. Some of his opponents flee to Canada after the fascist regime takes over the United States and later return as part of a resistance which aims to dismantle the actions from within.

I also recall *The Zone of Interest*, a recent movie that begins on a lovely afternoon somewhere in the Polish countryside. A father and mother are enjoying a picnic on the banks of a river with their children splashing around in the sunshine. The father is the commandant of Auschwitz, and he and his family live in a villa with a garden and greenhouse, adjacent to a long concrete wall, edged with barbed wire, and the ominous-looking buildings behind it. Almost every idyllic scene — whether inside or outside the villa — is underscored by a low, unceasing mechanical drone, which sometimes mixes with the sounds of human screams, dogs barking, and gunshots.

I am trying to make sense of a world in which some children are happily growing up in a peaceful neighborhood and, down the street, there are angry adults who hate Jews and actively participate in demonstrations against them. There is something about the juxtaposition that is especially disturbing and horrifying, almost as if the happy children and the angry adults are involved in a danse de Macabre, a dance of death that has become normalized.

Hanah Arendt calls this "the banality of evil," the idea that horrific acts of evil can be perpetrated by seemingly ordinary people who simply follow orders or conform to societal norms, without any deep-seated malicious intent, essentially making evil appear mundane and commonplace, rather than the result of a twisted or fanatic personality, which seems almost incomprehensible, but is real.

Arendt is referring to the normalization of antisemitism — that is, hostility and hatred of Jews — which is dangerous for Jews, of course, and also for the larger society. It legitimates those who engage in antisemitic acts against Jews, and also exacerbates intimidation, anxiety, and fear for other targets of hate in society.

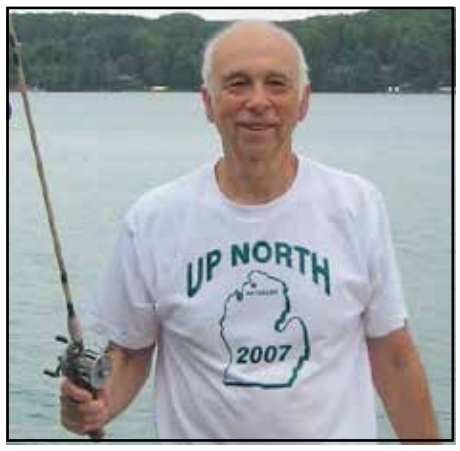
It is difficult to imagine how normalization of antisemitism might be changed, but it is not impossible. Indeed, the Copernican Revolution significantly changed the world by shifting the prevailing view of the universe from an Earth-centered model to a Sun-centered model, fundamentally altering humanity's understanding of its place in the cosmos. If this happened, then surely it is conceivable that altering the normalization of antisemitism is possible.

We feel safe living in Ann Arbor, notwithstanding the juxtaposition that the children on our street are happily playing outside our window, while adults practice antisemitism down the road.

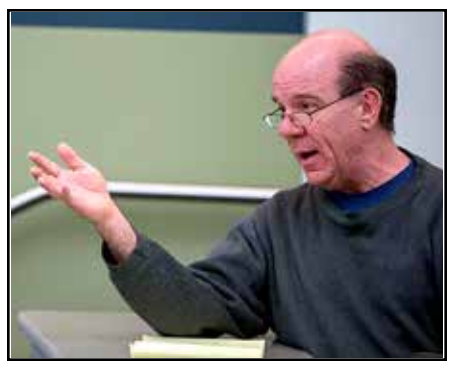
But if Kristallnacht took place in Germany, is it possible that it might also happen in Ann Arbor? We feel fortunate to live on a peaceful tree-lined street in Ann Arbor and also know that there were places and times in Europe when they stormed the doors and took the Jews away. If we told one of our neighbors that we can see government authorities coming down the street, and taking us away, would they say that we are seeing things that are not there, when they really are?

It is difficult to imagine something similar happening here, but because it has happened before, presumably it can happen again. ■

Obituaries



Robert Louis Segar was born in Detroit, Michigan, on June 19, 1935. He died on February 26 in Ann Arbor surrounded by loved ones. Bob was beloved by many. He was revered for his moral compass and he embodied kindness, patience, wisdom, modesty, respect, and integrity. He also had a fabulous sense of humor and passionately enjoyed eating. He was a devoted husband to his wife Ilene, father to Stephen (Andy), Michelle (Jeff), and Aviva, formerly known as Diana, (Jimmy), and grandfather to Gabe, Caleb, Zach, Bella, and Eli. He was an avid fisherman and enjoyed fishing competitions with his friends and family on Walloon Lake. Bob reached the highest level of achievement as a lawyer. In 1966 he argued the landmark Virginia Poll Tax case before the U.S. Supreme Court and won. This landmark case found the requirement of poll taxes to vote in state elections unconstitutional. Bob was in the first graduating class of Mumford High school in Detroit and attended both undergraduate and law school at the University of Michigan. Donations can be made in Bob's memory to the ACLU or the Southern Poverty Law Center. Tributes may be shared at www.sharpfuneralhomes.com



Mark Higbee, a history professor for 31 years, passed away on February 13. Mark was born in 1959 in Indianapolis. He married Kate Levin in 1986. Mark joined Eastern Michigan University's history faculty in 1994 and was an active member of the EMU and Ypsilanti communities.

It was always inspiring to have a conversation with Mark. He was funny, incredibly well informed, and wildly imaginative. He always tried to stand up for what he believed was right, and was sometimes impolitic in doing so. Mark had broad interests — in addition to history, he was passionate about politics, film, theater, nature, and the environment.

Since 2005, Mark used a nationally recognized innovative teaching method, Reacting to the Past, in selected courses. The method involves elaborately designed role-playing games in which students assume historical roles from a famous moment in history, and then pursue the goals of their assigned character – in collaboration with some classmates and in opposition to others. The Reacting method teaches skills in research, writing, public speaking, and teamwork; it has a proven record of engaging undergraduate students in ways that are not common for American university students.

In 2009, Mark accepted the request of EMU Provost Jack Kay to create a Reacting to the Past game on Frederick Douglass and slavery in American history. This task took a decade, but in June 2019, it was published by W.W. Norton in its RTTP series, as "Frederick Douglass, Slavery, and the Constitution, 1845," with coauthor James Stewart. Even before publication, however, the game was used in countless classrooms across the country.

Survivors include his wife Kate, sons Marley and Jonas Higbee, brother Michael Higbee, sister Mary Forbes, and nephews Joshua Forbes, Stephen Higbee, and Christopher Higbee. Memorial gathering for Mark Higbee will be April 3 from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. in the faculty lounge (room 247) of McKenny Hall EMU.

Harold A. (Buddy) Marks, Jr., age 93 of Grand Blanc, passed away peacefully in his sleep on February 20 at Henry Ford Hospital in Grand Blanc. Harold was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, and great grandfather. Harold is survived by his wife Janet Warren, his children Thomas (Rebecca) Marks, Dr. Steven (Kelly) Marks, Michael Marks, and Catherine (Jack) Marshall, his sisters Anne (Harvey) Stein and Joan Siler, Janet's three children, Bruce (Erin), Elizabeth (Alvin) and Terese (Thomas), eleven grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. Harold was preceded in death by his wife of 49 years, Maxine Chaimson Marks, and his sister Susan Krinsley. Harold deeply loved all of his family and was also deeply loved by all of them.

Harold graduated from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and spent a lifetime as the school's most devoted sports fan. Harold was especially proud that three of his children (Tom, Steve, and Cathy) and one of his grandchildren (Jacob Marks) attended Michigan, and one of his great grandchildren (Allie Poe) is set to attend in the fall.

Upon graduating college, Harold enlisted in the United States Army where he served in the intelligence branch. He served during the Korean war and was stationed on an island in Alaska where he intercepted Soviet messages. His unit was awarded a citation for their work.

Harold had an exceptionally successful career as a Certified Public Accountant. He was a partner in the Grand Rapids firm of Prangley, Marks & Company from 1974 until his retirement at age 78. .

Beginning in childhood, Harold was an avid golfer and played regularly for most of his life. He coached his children's sports teams and took one of his senior league baseball teams to the World Series, where they finished in third place, losing only to Taiwan and Hawaii. Harold was also an avid reader and typically finished a novel each week. He lived his life with happiness. He was almost always upbeat and resilient. He will be missed.

Memorial contributions may be made in memory of Harold to The University of Michigan - The President's Fund (www.umich.edu). Go Blue.

Alexander Weitz, 84, husband, father, and grandfather, died Thursday, March 6, at home after suffering from a series of increasingly difficult medical challenges for years. Dr. Weitz received his B. Chem E. degree from City College of New York in 1964, and then took a job at GE in Schenectady, New York. After marrying the former Susan Frank in 1965, he began studies that resulted in earning his doctorate in materials science from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1973.

He and Susan moved to Midland for his research job at Dow Corning Corp. He became a patent agent in 1984, and was admitted to the bar of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in 1986. He retired in 2001. But retirement was short-lived as he joined Novinium, Inc, a startup in Kent, WA, where he became patent manager. He retired again in 2015.

He was born in 1940 in Horodenka, Poland, now probably a part of Ukraine, as World War II was starting. At the age of 9 he came to the U.S. with his mother — his father having died — and began the job of learning English and becoming a good student.

In addition to his wife Susan he leaves two sons, Jonathan Weitz (Jessica) of Brooklyn, New York, and Jordan Weitz, of San Diego, California, and two grandchildren, Ethan and Gemma, both at home in Brooklyn.

Harriet Goldberg passed on Monday, February 24. She lived a life filled with love for family, friends, and humankind. She cared deeply about peace, education, and human rights and worked persistently for a better world in local and national organizations. She was a loving and dedicated daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandma, great-grandma, and friend.

Harriet was born on May 12, 1933, in New Bedford, Massachusetts, to Abram and Jule (Susman) Rusitzky. She grew up in New Bedford with her parents and her younger brother Barry. A voracious reader with a keen memory, Harriet did very well in school, earning a double promotion.

After high school, she earned her degree as a dental hygienist at Forsyth College in Boston and returned to practice in New Bedford. Two years into her career, one of her patients insisted on fixing Harriet up on a blind date. On their second date, David Goldberg told Harriet that he was going to ask her to marry him someday. They fell in love and were married in the summer of 1955.

The newlyweds moved to New York City, where Harriet worked in a periodontist practice, supporting David as he completed law school. Afterwards, they settled in Toledo, Ohio, close to David's parents. Harriet gave up her dental hygiene career as she turned her attention to raising their three children, Stephen, Stuart, and Caren. Harriet tragically lost her beloved David to cardiac sarcoidosis in 1982. Harriet never wavered in her care for others. Throughout her life, she was a steadfast support and caregiver for her children, parents, in-laws, and other family members.

Her caring also extended far beyond her own family. Harriet became an activist, working tirelessly for a multitude of causes rooted in the principles of peace, justice, and human rights. She was active in the Toledo Peace and Justice movement, worked for nuclear disarmament, advocated through the coalition against gun violence, organized for many like-minded political campaigns, volunteered with Habitat for Humanity, and helped children with reading challenges at the Stewart Elementary School.

Alongside her role as an activist, Harriet also embraced a new role as a grandmother. Known to her adoring grandchildren as Grandma Harriet, she was famous for hosting sleepovers, baking the perfect chocolate chip meringues, and never missing a birthday, music recital, or other milestone. Aside from spending time with family, Harriet enjoyed gardening and reading, and became an avid exerciser, taking aerobics classes and riding a stationary bicycle at Vic Tanny, then Bally's Health Club. Her friendly smiles and greetings resulted in new friendships. Among them, several younger women sought and received Harriet's counsel on relationships and life choices. Harriet was a lifelong learner, taking classes in philosophy and literature at the University of Toledo.

As Harriet grew older and developed her own health challenges, she never wavered in her love. Harriet cherished long phone calls with her children, their families, and her close friends. . Her legacy radiates outwards through the countless lives she touched and uplifted. She will be deeply missed.

Harriet was preceded in death by her husband, David; parents, Jule and Abe Rusitzky; in-laws Doris and Morton Goldberg; and brother, Barry. She is survived by her children, Stephen (Nancy), Stuart (Jo-Jo) and Caren (Doug); grandchildren Daniel (Lina), Adrienne, Josh (Amanda), Adam (Andrea), Cydney, Allie, and Gavi, as well as great grandchildren Ethan, Andrew, Phoebe, Margo, Aliza, and Aster.

The family is grateful to the nurses and aides at Sunset and Ashanti Hospice.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Harriet's memory would be welcome to Congregation B'nai Israel, American Heart Association (Toledo), Save-A-Heart (Ann Arbor), Ohio Coalition Against Gun Violence, Moms Demand Action, or a charity of the donor's choice. ■

Happy Passover from JFS

Here's to full plates and happy hearts this Passover

JFS Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County

The Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor wishes you a

חג שמח

Happy Passover

Wishing you and your loved ones a joyous holiday, and may your cups always be full.

SAVE THE DATE

Annual Meeting
of the
Jewish Federation

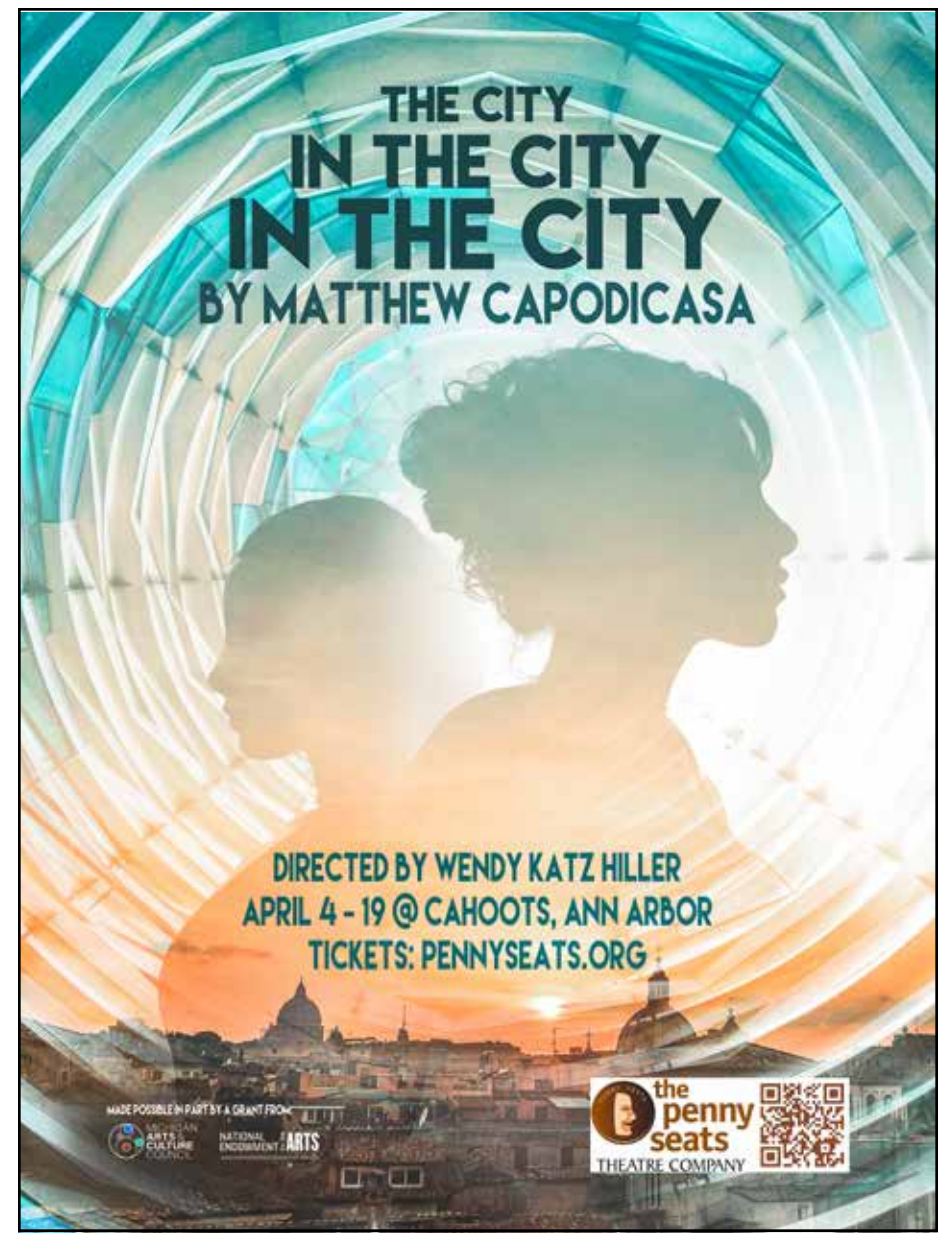
Wednesday, May 28, 2025
7pm

at the JCC of Greater Ann Arbor

Zemyck
Handcrafted Stoneware Pottery
https://www.etsy.com/shop/Zemyck
Zemyck is a Star Seller!
FREE shipping
Look for
Mother's Day sale
beginning
April 11

We can't help you find your umbrella.
But we can help you save for a rainy day.
bank of ann arbor
Member FDIC

ANN ARBOR DISTRICT LIBRARY
GARDENING & FARM FEST
SUNDAY APRIL 13
DOWNTOWN LIBRARY
11AM-4PM
AADL.ORG/FARMFEST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